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9/79

RAMDAS SPEAKS

VOLUME V

FRANCE, BELGIUM
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Anandashram Series No. 14

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FRANCE

Saint-leu-la-Foret, 14th September, 1954.
At the Residence of Miss Diana Mathot.

TAGORE AND PARAMAHAMSA

Q: Are there around us people who have reached Moksha or Nirvana and of whom we do not know?

Ramdas: There are so many, unknown to the world, who have conquered their lower nature and are living in the highest divine consciousness.

Q: When Swami Vivekananda asked Maharshi Tagore whether he had seen God, it seems Tagore replied that God had not given him the experience of oneness with Him. But yet Tagore was a very great spiritual power at that time.

Ramdas: One has to pass through several stages before one reaches the ultimate state of oneness with God. Tagore may have reached the last but one rung of the ladder. He was feeling the nearness of God and he had attained thereby great spiritual power. Ramdas spoke a little while ago about the power of Sattwic quality. When you are in pure Sattwa Guna you get glimpses of God. Oneness can be realised only when you transcend the relative and reach the absolute. In the Sattwic state there is thus a thin transparent screen between yourself and God, and it is due to this screen that you feel the sense of duality still persisting. Ramdas has seen with his own eyes that in this Sattwic state some souls have possessed immense spiritual powers by which they have been able to do wonderful work in the world. Thousands used to go to see them and derive benefit because they radiated Sattwic light which is God's own light, reflecting as it were through a thin transparent screen. So, Tagore must have reached this state and he frankly confessed that he had not realised his oneness with God. Whereas when Swami Vivekananda went to see Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to whom he put the same question, he said, 'I have seen God'. That means Sri Ramakrishna had gone beyond the Sattwa Guna and realised his oneness with the Truth, i. e., he knew that he and God were one. So, the difference between the two is that the one had reached the last but one step, while the other had reached the summit of spiritual realisation.

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MONASTIC LIFE IS A BAR TO SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

Q: The priest told us the other day that the founders of great monastic Orders had not yet reached the top of spiritual realisation and that often they had to go through two more stages before they could actually reach what St. Theresa called the Seventh Castle. Would that apply to Tagore also?

Ramdas: The followers of religious Orders are always handicapped. They do not rise beyond a certain stage in the spiritual advancement because they are bound by the institutions they have started. The spiritual Masters had not founded any religious organisations as such, but after their lifetime their followers started them. The Masters themselves never founded any religion, creed or cult, but preached to humanity the universal truths. Those who have started such organisations are caught up in them and their spiritual progress is obstructed and often cut off. They remain in lower planes and find it difficult to rise.

SELF-IMPOSED DISCIPLINE ALONE IS FRUITFUL

Q: Some days back I had a talk with a Roman Catholic monk, who is about 70 years old but has no realisation. He is not able to impart anything by his teaching or by his example. When we cannot find a real Teacher even in our own monastic Order, what can we do?

Ramdas: That may be the reason why some aspirants living in monasteries get out of them and come to the open, to find some spiritual guide. In spiritual matters, Ramdas has found that the best rules are those which are self-imposed and not those made for the aspirant by somebody else. You know how you should progress on the path and what disciplines you have to observe. You are the best judge in the matter. If you go by the rule of the thumb and act according to instructions chalked out for you by somebody else, however great, they do not help you on the spiritual path. On the other hand, your progress is rendered difficult. But if you examine yourself and find out your own defects and see how they can be best remedied by laying down for yourself certain rules of conduct and strictly abiding by them, it will be easy for you to go forward. That is how Ramdas felt. He never joined any organisation for his spiritual growth. Guru within him mysteriously guided him and made everything easy for the realisation. Then he found that the best rules to be

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followed were those which this Guru set for him from time to time. It is clear now that our guide in such matters must be the Guru within us and not without. A tree does not grow in the shade of another tree. If it is planted in the open it grows into a huge tree, whereas under another tree it will have only a stunted growth. So you must have free and open atmosphere, so to say, to develop yourself. You may receive inspiration from saints and sages but your inner growth will have to be in conformity with your nature. You cannot have spiritual unfoldment by trying to act according to another's instructions. You learn from the lives of great saints and sages that they never lived like hot-house plants. They never grew in Ashrams or hermitages. They got the highest realisation by their own Sadhana independent of any external guidance or interference. So, it is better to allow the soul to evolve freely in an atmosphere of freedom unfettered by societies, institutions or organisations. On this point Ramdas is very definite. This is the truth, and truth sometimes is not palatable.

BE LIKE THE TREE THAT GROWS IN THE OPEN AIR

Q: Does it not mean that we are somewhere between the devil and the deep sea, because in the Ashrams and established organisations we enjoy certain amount of freedom and we find it very easy to be conscious that we have a divine purpose, whereas in the outside life, even if we have got the feeling of union with God, that is lost because we are busy with so many problems and have no time for anything? We are continuously mixing up with people who are always thinking of only sex and money. If we take a begging bowl we are sure to find ourselves in the prison. Perhaps that may be the solution.

Ramdas: You are fed in the prison free, without the need for begging. But let us try to understand the question. People have got a rosy idea about life in Ashrams. There are so many who have lived in an Ashram for a very long time and yet they have not made any appreciable progress. So they have left it. If they continue there, they remain where they started from and sometimes they have also fallen. They go to an Ashram with so much aspiration, and after sometime it cools down and they feel they had better be outside the Ashram. Just a while ago Ramdas said that a plant cannot grow under a big tree even if it is of the same species. You must receive the grace of a saint, go out and practise

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for yourself as a pearl-fish does. The fish takes in a drop of rain water and then goes into the depths of the sea to fashion the drop into a pearl. We must receive grace from saints and purify ourselves so that we can realise God within us. It is a common experience that those disciples who live in the constant company of their Masters slacken their disciplines. They depend on their Masters for guidance and protection.

So they do not rely on God within. The disciples can look within and get guidance only if they stop looking upon somebody outside for guidance. What is needed is that you should turn your mind within, and the best thing for that is to remain where you are and practise the disciplines prompted from within and finally get divine illumination. That is what Ramdas himself did when he was going from place to place soon after his initiation by his Guru. Though he visited many Ashrams, he had no idea of living in any of them permanently. He had Darshan of great saints but found that those who remained in their company did not develop though they had stayed there for fifteen to twenty years. They had practically gained very little. They asked Ramdas also to stay on there. But God within told him to have company of the saint for two or three days and then go into solitude. If he had remained in such Ashrams he also would have become one like those who had stayed there for many years and got nothing. Though he was moving from place to place he had his mind always in God, enjoying full freedom. In that freedom God taught him what he should do and what he should not, in order to purify his mind and make himself ready for God-realisation. So, hand yourself over to the Divine and be guided by Him completely. Receive the grace of saints but do not think of taking shelter permanently in any Ashram. Be like the tree that grows freely in the forest. Live alone. Then God within you will talk to you, help you, guide you from moment to moment. This is what the Guru teaches you. God within, from whom you receive inspiration, is none other than your Guru, who initiated you from outside in the form of a human being. In fact, he is your Antharyami, the Atma within you, who appears before you to show you that he is within you. When you know this it is for you to find Him within, depending only upon His help. So many have been hanging upon the Guru outside, but after the Guru passes away they feel they are stranded. How can the Guru pass away? At the very start they ought to have found the Guru within themselves. Guru is the immortal Spirit. Never look

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upon him as a mere person. If you have this attitude and experience from the very beginning, you will never think the Guru ever dies; you will never feel his absence as you know he is eternally within you.

GURU GUIDES YOU TO HIMSELF WITHIN YOU

Q: Does the Guru show only the way but not take the disciple to the destination?

Ramdas: Guru shows that he is dwelling in the heart of the disciple. This is the first instruction of the Guru and he also teaches the disciple the ways of approach. If the disciple follows them he will go within himself and realise the Guru who is no other than God. Guru's work is to dispel darkness and bring light. He awakens the disciple to the consciousness of the all-pervading, eternal nature of God. So you find that the Guru not merely shows the way but also takes the disciple to the destination. The destination is God within him.

Q: Therefore the Guru guides us to the destination, but is not the destination.

Ramdas: Destination is God. God and Guru, as Ramdas said, are one. God within you cannot be seen. He comes to you in human form and shows that God whom you seek is within and that he who is instructing you and God within you are not different. He assumes the human form to guide you to go within because you do not get any direction yourself from within as your mind is impure. Internal guidance can come to you only when your mind is pure. So the Guru from outside teaches you how to purify your mind so that you may see God within you and also realise that Guru and God are one.

OUR MINDS CREATE HELL OR HEAVEN

Q: I believe that if our intention is good we will get guidance from God. Do you agree with it, or do you think that some special technique is essential in Sadhana? It is also said that he who knows the Truth can manage to be happy even in hell.

Ramdas: That is what a devotee in India also said, "Oh God, I do not care whether you put me in hell or heaven, as I can be happy anywhere in your remembrance. If you put me in hell I will throw into it one drop of the bliss I am enjoying through

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communion with you and convert it into heaven". So hell and heaven are in our own minds. If our mind is in tune with God, we are in heaven. If not, we are in hell. Even if we are taken to heaven we will be unhappy if we forget God, and turn it into a veritable hell. We may have very good intentions, but intentions alone will not be enough. We must also live up to those intentions. We may have pious thoughts but not do pious actions. Unless our good thoughts are translated into action we will be like trees that bear no fruit.

MANTRA PURIFIES WHEN CHANTED WITH LOVE

Q: Is there a special technique for repeating Ram Mantra? In the West we have been told that there must be the exact sound and exact pronunciation of the words if we are to get the fullest benefit.

Ramdas: What is needed is that we should repeat the Mantra with all love, faith and devotion. Even if we repeat it according to certain rhythm and pronunciation suitable for that particular Mantra it may of course produce some harmonious vibrations in us, but surely it will not lead us to higher experience of union with God. It may give us some joy because every music gives us joy. We can derive real benefit only if we have intense love and devotion. The Mantra purifies us thoroughly and attunes our mind with God so much so that we forget the body-idea and realise our oneness with Him. It is important that we should not make a mistake in repeating the Mantra. Ramdas has noticed that our European friends are unable to pronounce some of the Sanskrit words properly. Even in repeating Ramnam they make slight mistakes. Such mistakes should be avoided.

Q: Can't God understand even if we mispronounce His name?

Ramdas: He can, provided you feel you are taking His name. Then, even if you utter it wrongly it does not matter. When a child calls its mother it may be doing so in a distorted manner, but all the same the mother responds and loves the child. However, the mother teaches the child to pronounce the name correctly. So God will teach you, coming in the form of a Guru, to pronounce His name correctly.

Q: When one is in union with God, does that mean one is God—one's own God?

Ramdas: He is God, and for him everything is God.

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SATAN IS EGO

Q: In your conscience, is there such a thing as the idea of sin as taught by Christian religion?

Ramdas: Sin has come from Satan, is it not? Ramdas compares the ego within us to Satan. The ego makes us do evil things. Evil things are done with a sense of separation from our fellow-beings. The sense of separation itself is sin. To know that you are one with others is virtue. So, who is making us think that we are separate from others? The ego. We must free ourselves from the clutches of the ego and then we will be free from the sin of separation and attain to a state of unity which is immortality, peace and bliss. If you want to conquer the Satan within you, you have to follow the teachings of Jesus who came to tell us how to conquer Satan. He said: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." That is the way by which you can conquer the ego-sense, rise above the sense of duality and reach supreme unity.

Q: As long as we try to overcome it, it means we have not overcome it.

Ramdas: True. By struggling single-handed we sometimes meet with defeat. If we take God's help we will succeed.

Q: Should this victory be a continuous process?

Ramdas: When you have triumphed over evil completely, you will ever be in the divine consciousness and you will feel ever one with God. Then there is no fall from that state, because God's grace has entirely transformed you and rooted out the sense of separation from Him.

DEVOTEE IGNORES THE PROBLEM OF REINCARNATION

Q: Is the problem of reincarnation controversial in India, as it is in the West? Some philosophers say it is true and others say it is not.

Ramdas: From the point of view of a devotee who strives to surrender himself to God and get His full grace, it does not matter to him whether he believes in reincarnation or not. So the question may be overlooked by a seeker after Truth. His one aim and ambition is to make himself fit for God-realisation. He should invoke the grace of God to help him in his struggle, and go forward. Let us take it that we are starting our life here and now. We know our own weaknesses and it is clear that we are

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unfit to realise the all-powerful, immortal God. So we go about asking those who are advanced in the path for instructions in order to purify ourselves, which is a necessary condition for realisation. We must know how to walk on this path and how to reach Him by overcoming obstacles. After receiving their instructions we have to follow the path strictly.

By battling against the obstacles that come in our way, we develop inner strength so very necessary for our progress. We also know that God Himself has put these obstacles in our path for our own good. The question of past life and future life does not in any way trouble us. That is how Ramdas himself felt when he was marching on the path. He never bothered about the past or the future. His concern was with the immediate present. Let us try to be in tune with God in the present and attain that spiritual destiny for which alone God has given us this human body.

In Christianity and Islam we find that no mention is made of past lives, and Christian mystics ignore the question of past lives. It is not essential that one should believe in past lives. In India devotees or mystics feel that God does everything for the best. They have the conviction that everything happens by the will of God who is all love and mercy. Even the worldly losses that come to them, they consider as God-ordained and they submit. They are fully confident that by passing through sufferings patiently, they will ultimately get transformed into the Divine.

'UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT WEARS A CROWN'

Just as manure is necessary for the growth of the plant, they consider that trials and tribulations are necessary for the growth of the soul. In this way they conquer all suffering. Joy and sorrow are all mental states. When you are in a particular state of mind you take certain happenings as for your good and you are happy. When you are in another state of mind you take the same events as harmful to you and so you are unhappy. Evil and good are only mental states, and nothing outside you exists as good and bad. It has been rightly said: "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." There is no standard of good and evil universally applicable. All our standards are mind-made. If you take everything that happens as coming from God, you will remain serene and calm. Mahatma Gandhi was put in jail. There were also many thieves in the jail. But the difference was that

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while the one was laughing, the others were crying. When the mind is free you keep yourself happy, but if the mind is bound you remain unhappy wherever you are. If you take it that God's will prevails in the world and by His will everything happens, you do not see any evil anywhere and there is no suffering for you at any time. This is Ramdas' experience. When God took him away from the old sphere of life and made him wander on the face of the earth as a mendicant with only one cloth, he was calm, cheerful and happy. He had passed at that time through severe trials — hunger and many kinds of trouble — but he took every situation that came to him as willed by his beloved Master.

God never means ill. He is always loving and merciful. This is the attitude which Ramdas had towards all the trials which he passed through. Then he found that it is not the external conditions that make us happy or unhappy but our own attitude towards such conditions. There are so many millionaires who have big houses, many servants and all the things necessary for material enjoyments, but all the same their lives are miserable. They go to Fakirs like Ramdas — wandering mendicants ever immersed in bliss and always smiling — and ask them where they get their happiness from. They say, with all the comforts they enjoy they do not find happiness and want to know how they can get it. Really, if you have found happiness within you, you are the King of kings; but if you have not found it you may be the emperor of the world but still you may be the most miserable man. Where is this happiness? It is within you. A poor man in a hut who remembers God is far happier than the man sitting on the throne who forgets Him. You think happiness eludes you like the will-o'-the-wisp. If you have discovered the fountain of happiness within yourself, what do you care for name, fame and wealth? If they come, it is all right. If they do not come, still it is all right. Whatever depends upon external things is perishable, because the external things themselves are perishable. Perishable things cannot give you lasting peace and happiness. The imperishable alone can give you true and lasting peace and that imperishable is within you.

In every part of the world you will see the same eagerness to possess wealth, name and fame. All these things can never grant you happiness. Therefore it is said, contentment is a divine virtue and a continual feast. If you have contentment you can always be happy, whether you sit on the throne or sleep on the foot-path. External conditions do not affect you at all. This is

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the supreme state which sages advise you to attain. When you are striving to get things from outside for ministering to your senses, do you realise how much harm you are doing to your fellow-beings? This spirit of selfishness and exploitation is causing all the chaos and conflicts in the world. If you find happiness within yourself, you will never try to exploit others. All such actions have their own reactions and they will rebound on you. We can find peace within ourselves only when our actions are spontaneous; when they are meant for the good of everybody and are entirely free from selfishness.

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The Centre Vedantic Ramakrishna,
Gretz, France,
15th September, 1954.

"WHO IS YOUR RAM?"

Questioner: I should like to know something about the Ram you are speaking of. Is it the historical Ram?

Ramdas: You have put a very difficult question because Ramdas' Ram is a wonderful Ram, so also perhaps the God whom so many saints and sages of the world have realised. Ramdas feels Ram's presence at every moment of his life, but still he is unable to tell you what He is like. For instance, omnipresence is one of His attributes and to describe what this omnipresence is is not easy. One can feel about it but cannot describe what it is like. At the beginning when God wanted Ramdas to walk on the path of God-realisation, he started repeating राम (Ram), the simple name of two letters. At that time he had a very hazy idea as to what Ram was. His mind-waves gradually settled down and he enjoyed a certain measure of peace. Later on his Guru came to him and initiated him into the Mantra "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram." He did not tell Ramdas the meaning of the word Ram, whether he was the historical figure, the son of Dasaratha, or whether he was the all-pervading God. After he started chanting the Mantra given by the Guru, within a very short time he reached a state of mental exaltation and elevation full of light and peace so much so that at times he used to lose himself in a supreme consciousness forgetting the body. He was repeating the Mantra incessantly, almost throughout day and night.

THE VISION OF LORD KRISHNA

One night when he was engaged in the chanting of the Mantra he saw before him the image of Lord Krishna. It was a wonderful vision. He saw Lord Krishna standing before him with his flute in hand and dancing at the same time. The charming figure fascinated him, but he knew that that figure would not remain before him long but vanish, throwing him into a state of agony. So, at that time itself he prayed to Lord Krishna that he was not satisfied with this vision and that he wanted the universal vision

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of the Lord so that he could remain conscious of His presence at all times, behold Him everywhere and be ever in union with Him. Ramdas asked for this because he had learnt in the Bhagavad Gita that the highest vision was universal vision after attaining which there was no fall for the aspirant. He becomes one with the Divine — the very embodiment of the Divine. The Lord has said therein that after many births a man attains knowledge of the Self and after that he attains the vision of Vasudeva everywhere and such a state is rarely achieved. This is the vision which Ramdas considered as the goal to be reached and he was longing for it. So when Lord Krishna gave him a vision in his Avataric form Ramdas was not satisfied.

DARSHAN OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

In response to his prayer He in a mysterious way took Ramdas to Thiruvannamalai where Sri Ramana Maharshi lived. One morning after reaching Thiruvannamalai the Sadhu who accompanied Ramdas took him for the Darshan of Ramana Maharshi. Ramdas went and stood before the Maharshi but the Maharshi did not say anything to him. He however poured his wonderful grace through his eyes into Ramdas' which caused a thrill in his body and made him for the time being forget everything by raising him to a state of inexpressible ecstasy. After Darshan of Ramana Maharshi God prompted Ramdas to go up the hill of Arunachala, a place where the Maharshi had lived for many years, performing austerities. Ramdas went up the hill and found a small cave in which he stayed for twenty days, all the time repeating the Mantra given by his Guru. At the end of twenty days when he came out of the cave, he found his eyes were filled with strange light and he could behold everywhere the Divine in all His splendour and glory, in the trees, in the stones and in all things before him. He was so much fascinated by this vision that he cried out that he saw Ram everywhere. He went about like one mad, embracing the rocks, the trees and even a passer-by there. In this state of frenzy — it was nothing short of frenzy that seized him — he felt he had gained that vision for which he had prayed to Krishna whose Darshan he had in Mangalore. As a result of that vision a veritable fountain of bliss was opened in him. Since then he has been bathing in bliss. Even now it continues to pour out day and night. He is immersed in an ocean of joy which is so vast and deep that it baffles all

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description. The purity which was gained by Ramdas after that vision is unparalleled.

GOD IS EVERYTHING

He knew when he was made to enter the path, that he would, by the grace of God and through continuous repetition of His name, attain to a high state of purity, but when he got it he found that every desire within him was completely destroyed and his heart became crystal pure. He was filled so much with joy and love that there was no room for any impure desire or attachment. This was something unimaginable. He was completely divinised in body, senses, mind, intellect and every aspect of his being. Thereafter he used to go about from place to place, extolling the greatness of God's name. He told people who gathered round him that by repeating the name of God one could attain the highest spiritual eminence and realise the divine presence, joy and peace and that one's heart thereafter would surely flow out with love towards the whole creation without any distinction of race, caste, creed, colour or nationality. Now the whole universe would stand transformed before one's vision as God Himself.

There is a *mahavakya* in the Upanishads which aptly describes what Ramdas' experience is — सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म, "Verily, all this universe is Brahman." Wherever you turn, it is He: up, down, this side, that side and in all directions you have the vision of the Divine because you have been made first to see the Divine within you. In the early stages of his struggle to attain Him he was oblivious of the world and he was lost in Him. After that experience he could behold the whole universe as the very expression of God. He feels one with everybody.

THE LESSON OF THE HOUSE OF MIRRORS

In this connection Ramdas remembers an example given by Swami Ramatirtha. In order to have some fun a man got innumerable small mirrors and had them fixed up in his room on the walls, in the ceiling and on the floor. There was not an inch of space where there was no mirror. After closing the door he switched on the light and stood in the middle of the room. He saw himself reflected in myriad forms in the mirrors: above, below and on all sides. He enjoyed the sight very much because he loved to see himself everywhere. After having had this fun for

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a while he left the room, but forgot to close the door. His dog entered the room a few minutes later and it saw its own reflections in the mirrors. The dog started barking at its own reflections and started jumping and fighting with them, as it thought those dogs were different from it. It fought till it got completely exhausted and fell down dead.

So man in a state of ignorance, when fighting with other people, thinks that they are separate from him. When he realises that all forms are the images of his own Self, instead of quarrelling and disliking them, his heart will pour out love equally to all of them. It is then that the truth of Jesus' saying, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', is confirmed. Loving your neighbour as yourself is not possible unless you know that you are not different from him. If you have the vision of the Atman you see everyone as the manifestation of your own Self. This is the supreme vision of the Divine everywhere, the vision of the Immortal manifested as the entire universe and all the forms, creatures and beings in it.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

To the question whether God is personal or impersonal, Ramdas' answer is that God is at once personal and impersonal. You can behold Him as everything and in everything in the universe. At the same time you maintain a close relationship with Him in his personal aspect. He becomes your constant companion. You can talk to Him, you can play with Him and you can even joke with Him. He will be so intimate with you. He will protect you in ever so many ways and look after you mysteriously. This is true not only in the case of a particular devotee, but is equally applicable to all devotees in all parts of the world who have surrendered up their lives to Him entirely. In such cases He grants the devotees His universal vision and still remains their constant companion. So He is an Impersonal Person, that is, He is not only the all-pervading nameless and formless Reality, but He is also all that have names and forms. As your constant companion He guides you and looks after you just as a mother looks after the child. You feel His protection every moment of your life in a strange way. You can look upon Him as your father, comrade or master. How this is possible is very difficult to describe.

We have read such things in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. He used to have Darshan of some living images of Divinity. He

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even played with them. But if you try to understand this by the help of the poor intellect, which has only a very limited capacity, you cannot comprehend how these things are possible. On the higher spiritual plane you can actually experience this. Ramdas himself is having that experience, but still he cannot tell you what that Impersonal Person is like. Very often Ramdas tells friends that Ram told him this and that. You will find even in his books how he had conversations with Him. People wonder in what way Ramdas talked to Him and how He responded to his feelings, impulses and talks. This is a wonderful thing, but it is there all the same.

GOD—THE UNERRING GUIDE

Ramdas remembers one thing, that all through his Sadhana God was guiding him in a mysterious way from the very beginning. He knew it was God who gave him strength and it was by His grace he could boldly walk on the path, hold on to Him and attain the goal. When the goal was attained he found that he was taken on the path unerringly. God took him straight to Himself and gave him the all-comprehensive knowledge of Himself as personal and impersonal—as Purusha and Prakriti and also as Purushottama. Purushottama—Purusha and Prakriti at once and beyond—is the all-comprehensive and all-transcendent Godhead. God had taken him to this height and he found that He could be experienced in every aspect. Therefore it is said that Moksha is of various kinds, and all are to be enjoyed simultaneously. You can see Him, you can be one with Him, you can be at the same place where He is and you can be like Him.

SHIVA AND SHAKTI

In the course of his Sadhana he realised that continuous remembrance of God which the Hindus call Smaran, complete self-surrender which means offering yourself entirely to God and thus freeing yourself from the ego-sense, and the universal vision are all one and the same thing. Constant remembrance of God does not permit of the continuance of the ego-sense persisting in you. Self-surrender necessarily dissolves the ego-sense with the result that you come to know that you are not the body but the all-pervading static and silent Brahman. This realisation at once

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grants you the vision of the whole universe as the expression of that all-pervading and static Brahman. Then it is that you see everything as Brahman. You realise that the manifestation is He and the unmanifest all-pervading substratum of this manifestation is also He. These two aspects you ultimately see as one, as they are not separate. They are described as Shiva and Shakti. Shiva is the static aspect and Shakti is the dynamic aspect. These two aspects co-exist and you see no distinction between them. Now you are completely free from ego-sense and you become the embodiment of Divinity; your actions are the actions of the Shakti and you yourself are not the individual but the all-pervading Brahman.

It is said in the Bhagavad Gita that then you do actions as if you are not doing anything. As Brahman you are inactive and as Shakti you are active. So you act and at the same time not act. This is action in inaction and inaction in action as the Gita teaches. How these two can go together cannot be easily comprehended. It was in this spirit that Arjuna was advised by Lord Krishna to fight. He was made to know that he could do all actions in the battle-field and still remain as if he had done nothing at all, instead of abandoning the fight. This is a great lesson as to how we should live and act in this world. This requires the knowledge of the Purusha first. And then we do all actions as Prakriti and such actions leave no impression on the Purusha who is only a spectator inspiring Shakti to create, preserve and destroy. As body we are Prakriti and as Atman we are Purusha. If we realise this truth we can be free and still be active in the world. Our actions will be of universal significance because they are done by the universal Shakti.

TWO KINDS OF BHAKTI

Now Ramdas is going to speak to you about two kinds of Bhakti. One is called Gauni Bhakti and the other is called Parabhakti. Gauni Bhakti means preparatory Bhakti. In this state the devotee forms a relationship with God and looks upon Him as master or mother and himself as servant or child. He struggles day and night to remember Him constantly so that he may see Him. In this effort necessarily his mind gets more and more detached from the sense objects. There are so many alluring objects in this world and when the attachment to these is loosened, the mind is drawn more and more towards God and gets

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engrossed in His remembrance and meditation. The struggle at this stage is very keen.

So out of Bhakti springs Vairagya or dispassion, a kind of inner recoil from the objects of the senses which had held the devotee in bondage so long. After he has gradually got himself free from the clutches of these low desires, he approaches the Divine through complete surrender. Self-surrender brings about the union of the soul with God to such an extent that the devotee loses his individuality and identifies himself with, and merges in the universal Spirit. The result is he knows that in essence he and God are not different. This is called Jnana, Self-knowledge or knowledge of Brahman.

But, for the devotee this does not seem to be the end. He wants to retain the Bhakti in him and wishes to maintain the relationship with God as master or mother. Thus he reaches the state of Parabhakti in which he beholds the whole universe as the manifestation of his Beloved and looks upon Him as father, mother, friend, comrade or master and upon himself as child, friend or servant. In this attitude he continues to have constant companionship with Him even after attaining the vision of the Impersonal and the vision of the Universal. In this relationship with God he retains a sense of duality with the sole object of enjoying the bliss of communion by talking, singing and hearing about Him.

If you want to enjoy the bliss of love, there must be two. When you lose yourself in the Divine completely and dissolve your individuality there will be nobody to enjoy the bliss of love. If you become sugar itself you cannot know the taste of it. You have to become the ant to taste the sugar and enjoy its sweetness. So after becoming sugar you remain separate from it, become an ant and eat it.

So also the devotee after realising oneness with God still remains separate from Him in order to express his love of God in various kinds of service. This is considered by devotees as the highest achievement because the joy they get by this communion is so rare and sweet that it is beyond comparison with anything else, even with the joy of Moksha or liberation. Therefore the devotee says, "I do not want Moksha,--but I want to remain ever Your child". Moksha is not a thing to be attained but this relationship is an exalted and sweet acquisition. So the devotee remains separate from God just as Jesus felt "I and my Father are one; yet I am son of my Father." Ramakrishna Paramahamsa

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realised his identity with Kali in her impersonal aspect. Still he wanted to remain a child of the Mother as in that relationship he was able to enjoy bliss by talking so lovingly about her.

WHAT IS GRACE?

Now Ramdas is going to speak to you a few words about grace. Without grace nothing can be done by us. Many people think that we are doing everything by our own will and strength. This is utterly false. It is the divine grace alone, it is the divine power alone, that is responsible for our doing anything. Since we do not know that divine grace is working through us and we think that we are doing everything ourselves, all our actions, thoughts and feelings get vitiated. When we root out the ego-sense and God's light and power flow in us, we become conscious that the divine power is responsible for all our movements and actions.

It is by God's grace alone that our mind turns towards God. We become conscious of His grace and that also is because of His grace. How can we otherwise remember God? We do not remember Him and are not conscious of Him for several years in our life and suddenly a day comes when our mind turns towards Him. It is He who awakens us. Some attribute it to our past Samskaras. Ramdas can say this that by divine grace alone we are drawn towards Him. It is rightly said by a devotee, "Oh God, I remember You because You remembered me first". If He had not remembered us first it would not have been possible for us to remember Him.

So His grace must work in us so as to make us seek Him and ultimately realise Him. Even the first glimmer of the desire to find Him comes to us by His grace. If we want to make His grace work with greater force in us we must contact a saint, and accept him as our Guru. He teaches us that we are mere instruments and that God is the sole doer.

GOD-POSSESSION

When Ramdas started on his first pilgrimage he felt God had possessed him. People asked him why he had to go. Ramdas only knew it was all God's will. When this consciousness fully dawns in you, grace has descended on you in all its fullness, and you begin to feel you are nothing and God is everything.

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This supreme state can be got through God's grace alone. God and Guru are not different. Many people think that the Guru they have accepted is only a human being. In fact God who has awakened you from within has come in a human form to guide you on the path, to infuse into you spiritual strength so that you may know the fullness and supremacy of grace. Surrender comes automatically by grace.

As the grace begins to work in you and as you become more and more conscious of it, your ego-sense leaves you just as darkness is dispelled by light. So grace comes to you from God within you and also from God without you. God without is your Guru. They are one and the same. It is their combined grace that removes all obstacles on the way and destroying all darkness or ignorance in you makes you an illumined being. So grace is all that you need and you can get it by contact of saints. In some cases when you are not awakened within, contact of saints awakens you. In the presence of a saint you become a changed person. From that time your only aim will be to realise God.

So grace alone can save you. There is no other way. Grace is so powerful and it can act on any person whether fit or unfit. If fitness is the condition for the working of grace, it cannot be all-powerful, as in that case you can say you attain God by your own merit. Grace must be so powerful that it must make the unfit fit to receive it. So you can turn your mind towards Him through His grace alone, by the contact of saints. Then God will take you up just as the mother takes a baby up. You have simply to cry, "Oh God, lead me towards You and make my mind always dwell on You". If you pray in this way grace is bound to come to you.

OPEN YOUR HEART BEFORE SAINTS

If you are sincere and earnest in your aspiration for Him you will surely come in contact with a saint who will shower his grace on you and awaken you. He will guide you on the path till you reach the goal. When you go to a saint, keep the window of your heart open so that his influence, his grace, may enter into you and dispelling darkness give you inner illumination. You must be humble and guileless. Then you will certainly receive the light that you seek.

Ramdas felt after he received the grace of the Guru with the Mantra, that he was a mere automaton and some power within

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him was making him do everything. He went all over India tossed about like a dry leaf. Ramdas went with any person who called him and did anything that any person wanted him to do. He never cared to ask what sort of person he was and why and what for he wanted Ramdas to go anywhere or do anything. He actually looked upon all as his beloved Ram. Within and without he was seeing the same Beloved and he never felt he was doing anything by himself. Some higher Power or some higher powerful Being having possessed him and taken him entirely unto Himself, Ramdas felt that he was only an instrument.

THERE IS NO BARTER IN GRACE

When grace came there was a sudden change in Ramdas' life which transformed him completely. Grace did all things. He never did anything to obtain or deserve grace. Ramdas can tell you about the song of an Indian devotee who asked God, "Are you a merchant? You want me to perform Japa crores of times before you can give me Darshan. You give me something in return for something. This is barter. If you are really gracious you must shower your grace on me even if I do not do anything to deserve it." A man engages a labourer and makes him toil in his garden for the whole day. In the evening he pays him say 300 francs. Can you call it grace? The man has after all paid the labourer only his wages. If he tells the labourer that he pays him 300 francs as a mark of his grace, the labourer will retort that it is not his grace but only a recompense for his services. If it is to be grace, it must be given even if the labourer has not worked for it. Grace must spontaneously flow out of love and kindness. We are not to toil for it. Ramdas never felt he deserved it in any way. When he received grace he knew it was only due to the compassion of God.

SADHANA IS TO DISSOLVE EGO

Now the question naturally arises whether there is a place for Sadhana or effort on the part of the aspirant who is struggling to realise God. Why should he undertake at all any spiritual discipline if everything depends upon grace, and grace alone can liberate him? The secret is that Sadhana is performed to know that by Sadhana we cannot attain God. So long as the ego-sense persists we cannot reach Him. The ego-sense it is that makes us

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struggle hard. For instance, if we want to concentrate on God we apply so many methods and after all that struggle we find the mind is as restless as ever. We sit for meditation but the mind wanders. It may seem to be under our control for a second or two and the next moment it is somewhere else. By this we come to know that by our effort alone we can do nothing.

Then we surrender to God saying, "Oh God, I am nothing. You are everything". We come to that stage by struggling hard for some time. We let go the struggle and surrender ourselves to God and we get what we want. The end of Sadhana consists in stopping the Sadhana in a state of perfect helplessness. God is called Anatha Natha. He can be our helper when we are fully conscious that we are helpless. We become helpless only after struggling for some time and finding that nothing is achieved. Knowing full well our powerlessness we surrender to God.

Who is struggling? It is the ego that struggles. By this struggle the ego knows that it is helpless and is nothing. It starts with the assumption that it will be able to be free by its own struggle. But it is soon disillusioned. Then it bends down before God and prays, "Oh Lord, I have come to you in complete surrender. Deign to liberate me and grant me your Darshan."

A man for hitting a mark takes up his bow and arrow. He fits the arrow on the bow and pulls the string to a certain tension and lets the arrow go. Instead of letting the arrow go if he keeps pulling the string, the arrow will never go and hit the mark. He has to release it. So also our struggle must cease after some time and we must surrender ourselves to Him. God assures us that if we go to Him in that spirit He will surely liberate us and grant us His Darshan.

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Saint-Leu-La-Foret,
France.
16th September, 1954.

A STORM IN A TEA-CUP

Q: People are afraid that by the atomic experiments the earth may be blown up altogether. Would that be a serious matter?

Ramdas: When we look at this problem from the universal standpoint it is insignificant in view of the vast changes taking place in the universe comprising innumerable planets and stars much bigger than the earth itself. When we take it from the individual standpoint, that too from the human standpoint, blowing up of the earth appears to be a great catastrophe in our eyes. Judged from the cosmic point of view it is no better than a storm in a tea-cup. In the universe millions of creatures are born every second and millions are destroyed at the same time. Creation and destruction as willed by God are going on without cessation. It is only the Divine at work in nature, and according to that law whatever is born must die, whether it be by war, by floods, by earthquake or by famines and epidemics. We find destruction going on a gigantic scale in all the worlds. The little wars that are taking place and the atom bombs that burst in the world seem to be very insignificant occurrences that affect humanity which is after all only an infinitesimally small group of life compared to all the unimaginably vast life in the universe.

We take only human beings into account when we speak of the destruction of the world, but we do not take note of the innumerable creatures, animals, worms and insects destroyed every moment in the natural course. We do not mind them at all as our calculations are all based on the narrow human standpoint. When anything calamitous happens to human beings we are aghast because our identity with human beings is so deep that a vaster vision is denied to us. If we take the universe in its totality nothing should terrorise us, not even when a bomb falls and destroys the whole earth. This is possible only when we identify ourselves with the universal Spirit and look at things with that vision. If we identify ourselves only with the body then the fall of an atom bomb is a terrible thing.

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GOD'S VOICE IS HEARD IN ALL SOUNDS

Q: I had a funny experience. When I woke up in the middle of night I found that I was repeating the Ram Mantra. I was more surprised when I found that the mosquitoes were also repeating the Ram Mantra.

Ramdas: When the mind is filled with Ramnam we hear Ramnam in all the sounds. Once when Ramdas was having an evening walk with a Maharaja, the Maharaja casually mentioned that when he was going on his morning rides he could hear "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" in the sound made by the trot of the horse. When our mind is filled with God we see God everywhere, we hear His name everywhere, and we always feel His presence.

Q: Is it possible to have the thought of God always under modern conditions of life?

Ramdas: It is quite possible if we only really aspire for God and make an attempt to keep Him always in our thought. Here is a living example before you. He belongs to the modern times and not to the past.

Q: If the earth happens to be blown up, does that mean that the migrating souls will continue to be migrating in other parts of the universe?

Ramdas: Yes. They may continue to be born in other parts of the universe. But there is no chance of the earth being blown up or anything like that happening. God will not allow such things.

PILGRIMAGE

Q: What part did pilgrimages play in the Sadhana of Ramdas? If we follow him we will be tempted to walk from place to place?

Ramdas: Ramdas did not know in the beginning why he was taken on pilgrimage by God, but afterwards he came to know that he was taken from place to place especially from one shrine to another so that his remembrance of God may be continuous. He came in contact with many saints in holy places and this also helped him to keep his mind in tune with God. To remember God constantly there should be proper environment and suitable company. These two things were provided for Ramdas by God in his wanderings. That seems to be the reason for God having taken him on the pilgrimage. There are also people who go on pilgrimage with a light heart, but return with a heavy heart.

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For such people pilgrimage does not do any good. In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story. There was a great saint named Tukaram. He was a votary of God's name.

Once some of the people from his village decided to go on a long pilgrimage and they requested Tukaram also to follow them. Tukaram expressed his inability but requested them to be kind enough to take with them to all places they visited a bitter gourd that he would give. He wished that the bitter gourd should be given a dip in all the holy waters where they took bath and also taken to the temples which they visited. Not caring to know the significance of what the saint said, the villagers took the bitter gourd from him and carried it all along their pilgrimage, obeying the instructions of the saint in regard to dipping it in the holy waters and taking it to the temples.

In a few months the party returned from the pilgrimage and handed over the bitter gourd to Tukaram. Tukaram was happy and invited all the members of the party for a feast the next day to celebrate the successful completion of their pilgrimage. For the feast, in addition to various vegetable preparations, Tukaram made a special dish out of the bitter gourd which he had sent on the pilgrimage and which had come back to him. All the pilgrims gathered for the feast. The various dishes were served, and they started eating. When they tasted the gourd preparation they all remarked it was bitter and asked Tukaram why it was so. Tukaram, as if greatly surprised, asked them how it could be bitter when it was made out of the gourd that had performed the pilgrimage. He knew it was bitter when he handed it over to them before the pilgrimage, but wondered why it had not lost its bitterness in spite of the pilgrimage. This was a great lesson to all the pilgrims.

So there are so many who go on pilgrimage and return as bitter as before. But if you go on a pilgrimage as urged by God within and continuously remember Him all through the pilgrimage and see only purity and goodness of God everywhere, you will get purity for yourself and the pilgrimage will be beneficial to you.

SUFFERING LEADS TO GOD

Q: I have been sick for many years and more so for the last few months in spite of my constant prayer. What is the meaning of such suffering?

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Ramdas: We can look at this question in two different ways. If we take it that we are suffering as a result of what we did in the past, we have to bear it cheerfully and accept it as a necessary condition for our spiritual evolution. Now we should take God's name continuously and live a life of righteousness because the sufferings came to us as a result of something bad done in the past. It is a lesson to us that we should entertain good thoughts and do good actions so that we can at least avoid suffering in the future. There is another way of looking at it. Have thought of God in the mind and as the thought merges in God more and more you will be able to bear the suffering cheerfully because suffering is a way that takes us to God. In suffering it is that we remember Him more than at other times. So we must take suffering as having come for our own good. We must believe that suffering is given to us by God Himself in order to draw us towards Him.

In this connection Ramdas remembers an incident in the Mahabharata. Kunti Devi, the mother of the Pandavas, was separated from her sons when they had to go to the forest in fulfilment of the vow they had taken. She found herself thrown into a sea of sorrow and in that state she constantly took Krishna's name. After taking Krishna's name continuously for some time her mind became free from sorrow and a strange joy filled it and she was very happy. Remembrance of Krishna continued without break and she used to have moments of great exaltation. When Krishna came before her and asked her what boon she would like to have, Kunti Devi simply replied, "Oh God, give me more suffering. Give me more difficulties." At this Krishna asked her why she wanted more suffering when he was there to give her all the pleasures of life. Then Kunti Devi said, "It is in my sufferings that I remembered you and became perfectly happy. But for the sufferings, I would never have thought of you."

In the case of Kunti Devi she had to ask Lord Krishna for suffering, but in your case He has given you suffering unasked, which means God is very gracious to you. What you should do is that you should remember God more and more and give up the body-idea or leave concern of the body entirely in the hands of God. Let His will be done. You may constantly remember Him and make your life blessed. It is in suffering that we continuously remember God and pray to Him for His grace.

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The body is subject to destruction one day or other. If you worry about the body and not about the Soul, it shows that you are too much attached to the body which is an obstacle to your spiritual progress. This does not mean that you should neglect the body. You may take medicines and try to keep the body in a good condition. But some diseases that come to us are not easily curable. We have to bear these patiently without grumbling. By God's grace they may be cured. Even if the disease is not cured, God will give us the necessary strength to bear it. However, our object should be to remember Him constantly, pray to Him and submit to His will.

BODY CHANGES. ATMAN IS CHANGELESS

Q: Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a great devotee of the Divine Mother and had made total surrender to Her. He suffered considerably in his last days. Why was that?

Ramdas: When the same question was put to Ramakrishna Paramahamsa by his devotees, he told them that it was the body that suffered and not he. The body is subject to birth, growth, decay and death. This is true of every object in the world, whether the body is of a saint or of a common person who has not realised God. The body is made up of five elements and at some time these five elements must disintegrate and dissolve into their respective elements. This is true of all beings in the world. In the Bhagavad Gita there is a verse describing the nature of the Atman, our true being:

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

"Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it,
water cannot wet it, and the wind cannot dry it."

So do not identify yourself with the body and think that with the death of the body you are also going to die. This is a great teaching of the Bhagavad Gita and if we take it to heart we must be concerned not with the body but with the Spirit and ultimately realise that we are the deathless, changeless, immortal Spirit or Atman. If we realise this we are free.

Sri Ramakrishna knew that he was the immortal Spirit and that disease and death are only of the body. Even in a state of utter physical agony, when he was asked why he was feeling the pain he said he was full of peace and bliss inwardly. It is clear

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that even in that condition he knew he was the immortal Spirit. He also remarked that the sufferings that he was passing through were vicarious because so many people who had diseases touched his feet. It is said he took upon himself the diseases and suffered for their sake. His disciples all over the world believe that he is an Avatar or incarnation specially come to the world for the redemption of mankind. There are instances in the lives of saints who had taken upon themselves the diseases of their disciples. God willed that he should offer his body as a sacrifice, just as Jesus did, for the good of humanity.

CHRIST AND RAMAKRISHNA ARE ONE

Q: I am a Christian and I am deeply attached to Christ. I am also greatly attracted by Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. However, I feel disturbed when I pay homage to them. It rather worries me to take Ramakrishna Paramahamsa on the same level as Jesus.

Ramdas: Where is the harm in putting them on the same level? They are of the same, the supreme Spirit. They are not different. The supreme Spirit has manifested both as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and as Jesus. When you revere Sri Ramakrishna you revere Jesus and vice versa. Both of them came to the world for the uplift of humanity and they came from the same Source. When you see the Source you do not see any difference between them. Although they were born in different countries, their mission was the same.

ALL PROPHETS COME FROM ONE DIVINE SOURCE

Q: The human tendency to compare one with another is, I think, a hindrance on the spiritual path. Is it not so?

Ramdas: We cannot but see difference on the surface, but many people, before they know that the Source of all incarnations is one, judge and compare two incarnations and try to find out who is true and who is not. You will find in several religions men who are strictly orthodox in their outlook, looking upon their own prophet as the only true one and rejecting all other incarnations as false or as not capable of liberating humanity from ignorance and bondage. This is a very narrow vision. We have to tell such persons that all the great teachers, saints, prophets, and incarnations have come from one Source and that

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Source is impersonal. If you take it in this way and treat with respect and veneration all the great prophets of the world, you will develop equal vision and love all human beings on the earth equally. By loving so, you free yourselves from the individual sense and merge in the universal consciousness which is the goal to be reached.

Q: Can one use both the Ram Mantra and the Ramakrishna Mantra?

Ramdas: It is better to use only one Mantra for our daily practice of concentration instead of chanting several Mantras. And the Mantra to be repeated is the one which the aspirant received from his Guru.

WHAT IS SIN

Q: What about the Christian idea of original sin and fall?

Ramdas: Ramdas has read in the Bible the story in which is described the creation, the coming into being of Adam and Eve, how Eve was tempted by the serpent, how they fell and how both were driven out of the garden of Eden. From that time it is said that the stigma of sin is attached to all human beings. But later came Jesus who regained for us the lost kingdom of heaven or the lost paradise.

Ramdas remembers the grand poems 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' written by Milton. Paradise was regained after Jesus came and preached that love was the only way by which people could wipe away their sin and endear themselves to God and that God's grace could take them to that heaven in which they would have absolute peace and joy. Here the original sin, whatever beginning it had, can be wiped out. The sin of the ego in each one of us becomes evident after we have passed from childhood into boyhood. We then develop the feeling of likes and dislikes and start a round of selfish activities which entangle us and cause misery and sorrow. Impressions of the impure actions on the mind are the sins.

Childhood is like heaven for us in which there is no desire, no illwill and no impurity. We are then so innocent and guileless. When we grow up and when the so-called knowledge dawns in us, in other words, when we have eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, we have a fall. So after sometime we find that we are going the wrong way and then having suffered for it we turn towards God and regain that lost innocence by complete

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surrender to Him and by His grace become His children full of light, peace and joy. This is regaining the lost paradise. This is the way how we redeem ourselves by His grace and attain a second childhood in which we remain ever blissful, peaceful and in union with the Divine. We reach the highest state wherefrom we never fall because we will be then absorbed in the all-resplendent life of the Divine.

This is how Ramdas looks at the question of sin. Ramdas can explain more clearly what he has said already. Adam and Eve were perfectly innocent at first but they fell after they ate the fruit of knowledge. Now after a pretty long period of ignorance or sin a human being regained his lost innocence and purity in the person of Jesus. As a human being Jesus came to the earth to show to the world that what was lost could be recovered by human beings. One can reach the spiritual state equal to that of Jesus and have no fall by standing firm against all temptations even as Jesus did, and Jesus has also shown that in the ultimate state of perfection there is no possibility of a fall. One remains ever in the purity and light of God. Nay, one becomes the very God on earth. It is not that we should merely remain followers of Christ but should raise ourselves to the stature of Christ.

FALL MEANS IGNORANCE

Q: Why did the Hindu scriptures make no mention of the fall?

Ramdas: The original sin mentioned in the Christian scriptures is the ignorance spoken of in the Hindu scriptures. In the Hindu scriptures they say that ignorance is without beginning but it has an end. So also the Christian scriptures say that one can get rid of the original sin. In both the religions it is said it can be done only by the grace of God. So Ramdas does not see any difference between what is said in Hindu and Christian scriptures about ignorance or sin because Ramdas equates ignorance with sin. There is difference only in the words used.

PURPOSE AND USE OF SUFFERING

Q: Could you tell us why animals suffer?

Ramdas: Ramdas takes it that animals have also souls. Some believe that animals have no individuality and they have only group consciousness. The souls of animals also transmigrate;

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they assume bodies after bodies and gradually evolve into human life. So if you look at the question from the standpoint of nature you will find that evolutionary change is the law of the whole creation. When such changes are taking place in the external universe they are taking place also in the bodies of animals or human beings. If you look at it from this point of view you will find that the diseases from which the animals suffer are only changes in evolutionary process.

The mystery of God's work eludes the grasp of our puny intellect. The mind is ever creating doubts and is never satisfied with any explanation. There are wheels within wheels, and if we go deep down within ourselves we will have no doubt and we will see that everything is all right as everything happens by the will of Providence who always means well. So God gives suffering to animals so that they may evolve to the higher consciousness until they assume the human body in which they seek union with God and by attaining which they get the supreme state of immortality for which all living creatures are aspiring.

Q: This suffering generally comes from bad action, also comes from simple mistakes as for example when we are in the sea and do not know that salt water is bad we drink salt water till we know there is clear water near. And for such simple mistakes we suffer.

Ramdas: You can give up looking at it from that point of view. You can take it that suffering has come to us in order that we may rise above suffering by attuning our mind with the highest Reality. So long as our mind is in the lower plane we recognise suffering and we feel that it is something to be avoided. But if we utilise suffering to raise the mind above suffering then suffering becomes a help, whether it has come as a result of bad actions or as ordained by Divine will. In any case what we have to do is only to make proper use of the suffering. Sufferings must raise us higher step by step to the Divine life.

There are so many who try to avoid suffering. They can never progress. There are so many who have by contemplation of God freed themselves from the pain of physical sufferings. When the mind is absorbed in God we are not affected by bodily suffering. The great sages have taught us in this way. In the Buddhist scriptures we find that the aspirants are asked to meditate on the cause of misery. They can get rid of misery by transcending the mind, intellect, senses and the body and reaching the state of Nirvana or liberation. So ignorance is the cause of

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misery and to remove ignorance should be our aim. That can be done by making use of misery to rise above misery.

There are so many who are overcome by misery so much so that they pray to God to remove misery which God has given them for their own good. They must accept it as having come from Him for their own uplift and evolution. We must never get attached to the body or think that we are the body and thereby subject ourselves to physical and circumstantial suffering.

EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT

Q: How can we cultivate great Bhakti?

Ramdas: The definition of Bhakti is intense love for God. If you have got that you are a Bhakta and you are on the path of Bhakti.

Q: In the West many people are materialistic and are absolutely atheists and consequently suffer from it. How can we help them sufficiently to bring them back to the consciousness of God or even to the idea of God?

Ramdas: By our attaining God ourselves and by giving them the benefit of our company. Our company should create in them faith in God and we should not look down upon them. Ignorance is the cause of atheism. Have sympathy and kindness towards atheists. Love them in spite of their ignorance and show by your life that you have attained God, by being always kind and forgiving to all alike whether they are atheists or men of faith. If they are in difficulty, help them as much as you can. Your loving attitude will gradually change their heart and they will know what a God-man is like. They will also feel that they should have the same love that you possess. In this way they can be gradually brought round. If you seek to help or raise others you yourself must in the first instance rise above your lower nature and dwell in the higher, in which you can be in tune with God. Example is always better than precept. Live an ideal life yourself and by doing so, change the heart of others.

ATHEISM IS NOT A SIN

The attitude generally adopted by those who are devoted to God towards atheists is not of the right kind. They condemn and mock at them. This must not be the case. There must be perfect tolerance because their lack of faith in God is ony due to their

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not knowing the inestimable benefit one gains by loving or knowing God. Atheism is neither a sin nor a crime. Until we come in contact with a soul who lives in God it is difficult to have faith in God which alone can take us to Him. At one time or other we have been atheists ourselves. Later on a turn came in our life, we changed and became ardent devotees of God.

This is true in the lives of most of us. So the atheists may be at the cross roads and suddenly by contact with a saint they may change and turn towards God. There have been many instances where a man who was living an irreligious life became a great devotee of God after coming in contact with a saint.

RIGHT METHOD OF EDUCATING CHILDREN

Q: What do you think of the present methods for educating children?

Ramdas: As it is, we see more importance is given to teaching the children arts and sciences, but very little of moral and spiritual instruction is imparted in the schools all over the world. So in every school spiritual and moral instruction based upon the essential teachings of all the great sages and teachers of the world must be given. In imparting this instruction such matters should be avoided as will create differences and conflicts. Only the essentials of all religions such as belief in God, prayer and righteousness should be taught to the children. They should also be taught to be kind and compassionate towards their fellow-beings. These ideas must be instilled into the minds of the children together with the ideas of self-sacrifice and service to others.

To be really serviceable to others it is necessary that they should be pure in thought, word and deed. This purity can be gained only by communion with God who is all peace, love and joy, and children must be taught to do so every day so that they may get strength and inspiration to lead a true life. This must be the back-ground of education in the schools. Without it the children may grow up into intellectual giants, eminent scientists, industrialists and so on, but they will be actuated in all actions by the motive to get power, name and wealth, with the result that they will create confusion and chaos in the world. This in its turn will bring unhappiness and misery to the whole society. We see at present the entire atmosphere is seething with unrest and agitation and it can disappear only when the growing generation

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is taught on the right lines so that they may contribute to the establishment of peace and harmony.

BEHOLD DIVINE BEAUTY EVERYWHERE

Q: What do you say about the contemplation of beauty in the outside world as the way of attaining contemplation of supreme beauty?

Ramdas: Beauty is inherent in every object in the universe, as the whole cosmic manifestation is the expression of the beauty of the Divine. We cannot look upon only one part of the manifestation as beautiful rejecting other parts as ugly. We must take the universe in its totality as the beautiful image of the Divine and love everything and everybody therein equally. When the eyes see with a limited vision they single out something as beautiful and something as ugly. We must rise beyond this vision into that infinite vision which sees beauty everywhere — in all objects and things in the world. This is possible only when our heart is filled with overflowing love towards all beings. Our love is given to the Divine, to the Divine in all His manifestations. Then it is that we do not see ugliness anywhere in the world.

A mother who loves her child however ugly, considers it to be very beautiful because her love sees beauty in the child. But if we divide our vision and see beauty in one and ugliness in another, it will not lead us to realise the beauty of the Divine who is all-pervading and immanent in every object.

WHAT IS REAL BEAUTY

Q: But will the artist endeavour to do something ugly? He will always try to make something beautiful.

Ramdas: The artist's business is to synthesise the so-called beauty and ugliness and depict nature as it really is and not as he imagines it to be. Even when he draws a picture he brings dark and bright shades in it. Dark shades, though to be avoided, are still used by the artist to throw into bold relief the bright side. He draws palaces and huts side by side. The artist works and reproduces everything, "holding the mirror up to nature" as it were. He takes things in totality. When he draws the picture of a leper it may appear to some people ugly, but for the artist who looks at things in a different light, it is as good as any beautiful picture he has drawn. He is not taken in by external

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appearance. External beauty is illusive. Two artists themselves will differ in their appraisal of such beauty. One may say that a certain object is beautiful while the other may say it is not. This, as Ramdas understands, should be the true vision of the artist.

The artist's sense of beauty is not only to see it on the surface but to look still deeper and see that absolute beauty is inherent in all things. For instance, when he is painting a landscape he is absorbed in the task of reproducing it on the canvas. He attunes himself with the Spirit underlying the landscape. When he works in this way he loses himself in ecstasy. He does it in a state of yoga — union with the Spirit of beauty in each and everything. Perhaps Ramdas has not made it clear though he has it in his mind and words cannot express the idea.

Q: Art may be a prayer offered to Ram.

Ramdas: Then you can call anything art.

Q: What about beauty and ugliness then?

Ramdas: It is all mental. What is beauty for one is ugliness for another.

Q: As you said everything can be taken as art then.

Ramdas: Everything can be taken as God. That will solve the problem once for all.

PARTING MESSAGE

Q: What is your parting message to us, Swamiji?

Ramdas: Ramdas' parting message to you all is: "Let your lives be fully imbued with the divine consciousness so that you can live the true life by which you can elevate yourself and realise your immortal nature and also become instruments in the hands of God for disseminating love and goodwill towards all beings on this earth. You can make your lives truly blessed when you live and act in the awareness of God within you. Let God act through you and do everything through you so that your life may be utterly freed and made to realise its oneness with God, because the ultimate end of all life is to realise its identity and union with the Divine, both in the manifest and unmanifest aspects. The manifest aspect is the vast nature that we see before us, and in every particle of the manifested universe He dwells. It is truly said that He is in the smallest of the smallest and in the greatest of the greatest. It is also said, in the smallest He dwells in His entirety and not as a part,

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We have been so much hearing about the atomic energy which, when released, can produce tremendous results because in the atom is involved universes. The omnipotence of the Divine is there hidden even in the atom, in the smallest particle of dust. As an example we can see how a small seed of a big tree like the banyan or the oak hides in itself the big tree, for when the seed sprouts it grows into a huge tree. If you collect all the seeds of that tree and bring forth more trees from them and if you go on multiplying the trees you can fill the whole universe with them *ad infinitum*. All this power of manifestation has come from one single small seed which counts for nothing.

So it is said in the Hindu scriptures that Pindanda is Brahmanda, the microcosm is macrocosm. This is evident from the vision which Krishna showed to Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. In the small human body of Krishna, he revealed innumerable universes to the vision of Arjuna. Again we find that when Krishna was yet a child his mother seeing that he had eaten mud, asked him to open his mouth and to her surprise she saw the entire universe in his mouth. It shows that in each one of us lies hidden universes, because the Soul, Truth or God within us, is not an individual entity but the universal Reality, cosmic or super-cosmic. This great Truth is dwelling in everyone of us. Let us live, move and act in the world, fully conscious of this great Truth and Power in our hearts.

So what we need is the consciousness — steady and unbroken — that we are one with this Reality. For this we should remember God constantly and dissolve the individual ego in the all-pervading, all-transcendent supreme Godhead — the one great destination which all have to reach."

FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE IMPERSONAL

Q: Are we developing too much personal attachment to you? If so how can we stop it?

Ramdas: You need not stop it. You can make Ramdas a stepping stone to rise to the higher consciousness which is the real consciousness. You may attach yourself to him as a form and through that form reach the formless. Very often some prop is necessary for us in order to walk on the path, and after we have gained sufficient strength we can throw off the prop and walk by ourselves. We require a ladder to climb to some height and after we reach there we have no more need of the ladder. So if you

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are attached to Ramdas as a form, let that form be a help to you to rise beyond all forms.

In one of the Upanishads you will find that Yajnavalkya, a great Rishi, when asked by his wife for a parting message, told her how to truly love another. He said "Love your husband not for the sake of the husband but for the sake of the Atman. Love your father not for the sake of the father but for the Atman. Love your brother, love your sister, love all your relations not for the external physical relationship, but for the sake of the Atman". Atman is all-pervading. It dwells in everyone of us. If we love our neighbours or our relations knowing they are not separate from us in the light of the Atman, then we really love them in the true sense of the term. If we are attached only to the external forms we are caught up in ignorance with the result that we are subject to fears, anxieties and worries born of likes and dislikes, mine and thine, and so on, because on the physical plane we are loving only those who are near and dear to us. Beyond the circle of our friends and relations we do not consider anybody as belonging to us and we call them not ours. So these ideas of mine and thine rise in our mind, and likes and dislikes follow. Wherever there is like and dislike, there is pleasure and pain, as whenever we like and accept something we are happy and whenever we dislike and reject something we are unhappy.

So this kind of love is not the thing that we should practise. Our love must be based upon our spiritual kinship with others. So if you love Ramdas, love him for the sake of the great Truth that lives within him which is the same as the Truth that dwells within you all. Then you will be benefited by the attachment or love you have conceived for Ramdas. If you take him merely as a body, you will not be deriving any benefit by the love that you bear to him. Love should be the expression of your oneness with him in Spirit. Physically we are separate, but spiritually we are one. In the awareness of this Truth, let us love everyone in the world. Then we can get happiness for ourselves and give happiness to others because in our love there will not be any trace of selfishness.

Where there is selfish love there is pain and misery for the person who loves. This kind of relationship on the physical plane is the cause of so much unhappiness in the world. If we enter into ourselves and find the great all-pervading Reality, we cannot but love others, as in them also dwells the same Reality that is in us. Then our love flows out alike towards people of all sects, creeds, races and nations,

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EAST AND WEST ARE ONE

People ask Ramdas what difference he finds between the people of the East and the West. This question was put to him after he had gone over three or four countries in Europe. Ramdas can tell you frankly that he does not see any difference because his vision is universal. He sees God in all beings in the East and in the West. So you are all as dear to him as those with whom he has been moving closely from his childhood. There is absolutely no difference. Differences are only on the surface, but in the depths there is only oneness and unity. If we pierce through the external veils of nature and go within and perceive the same Reality pervading everywhere, dwelling in the hearts of all beings and creatures, there cannot be any distinction felt at all between one set of people and another—people of one country and another. These differences and demarcations are born of ignorance and are only man-made.

As embodiments of the same Spirit we are all one, wherever and in whatever condition we are, because the Spirit that is immortal is equally dwelling in the hearts of us all. So it is that we can envisage the dawn of world-brotherhood, looking upon God as our universal father and mother. We as His children should not have any difference among us. The fights, wars and discords in the world have actually no meaning, aiming as they do only at ephemeral power, wealth and glory. The material achievements appear and disappear like bubbles on the ocean. We strive to catch them and for a moment they seem to be in our grasp, but the next minute they vanish and turn to nothing.

Peace is the quest, nay, the hunger of every soul, and that peace can be had only by uniting ourselves with the supreme Truth pervading everywhere. We are fighting to put down others and think that by doing so we will be happy and peaceful. History also goes to show that from time immemorial fights and wars were going on with the ostensible object of establishing peace and harmony in the world.

It is indeed an irony that people fight in the name of peace. Real peace can be got only by going within ourselves and finding the great Reality, God. The quest is inward. But what the politicians are now doing is that they are trying to patch up differences on the surface. They cannot achieve any success by such methods and naturally there will be clashes again and again. All of them talk of peace and at the same time prepare for war,

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If we find the Truth within us we know that all this talk of peace and harmony in the world by adjustment of differences through conferences and pacts goes only to show the futility of our efforts. We are coining new formulae to convince each other, but there is no true conviction and the result is confusion all round, bringing misery to the world.

There is only one way out of the impasse and that is for every individual to realise the great Truth that underlies the entire universe and thereby establish true harmony and goodwill on this distracted earth.

APPEAL TO ALL HUMANITY

Ramdas' appeal to you, friends of France, is that you should set about realising the Truth within your hearts and spread the glory of God everywhere and shed on all the people who come in contact with you the light which you have gained for yourselves. You can create thereby a truly peaceful atmosphere in and around you, which will scatter the war-clouds that hang over us. This is the humble appeal that Ramdas makes to you all. This is not only to you but to all the people of the world. Ramdas is carrying this message with him wherever he goes. He asks the friends everywhere to put their shoulder to the wheel so that they can realise the Truth and disseminate the ideal of universal love and service, because in the fulfilment of this ideal alone lies redemption, peace and harmony of the world. As a preparation for this great task, Ramdas again requests you to rid your heart of all hatred so that God's light may shine in it and the waves of love may rise. This love will enable the current of peace to pass from heart to heart and spread a peace-atmosphere all over the world and make wars and strifes impossible.

We may contend that the war mentality is created by a few persons or by a set of people and that the general population are not in favour of it and are not responsible for it. But this is not true. Each one of us is responsible for the war mentality. So long as there is hate and wrath in our hearts we directly or indirectly produce this war mentality and are setting up these leaders to enter into war.

If we keep our mind calm and peaceful in the contemplation of God within us and learn to love one another, these very persons who want to wage war will disarm themselves and the war idea will entirely disappear from the mind of man. So we must

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jointly try to produce a peace atmosphere. Each individual must do what lies in his power to create the atmosphere for peace and harmony in the world because individuals make humanity. So the responsibility lies on the shoulders of everyone of us either for war or peace. We cannot blame anybody else. We find now there is a cold war—a war of nerves. Even the peace-loving people are getting affected. So we as individuals can create an atmosphere, and there will be a collective effort also made, for putting down this war mentality and restoring peace and goodwill on this earth.

FEAR COMPLEX

There is another weakness in us and that is we are seized with a fear complex. We have become prey to fear. Death holds terrors for us. This is because we think we are merely physical bodies subject to birth, growth, decay and death. To shed this fear we must realise that we are immortal and even if the body perishes we are not going to perish. When fear leaves our heart we will remain in peace. Otherwise fear causes agitation in our mind and we become restless. We invite mishaps, calamities and catastrophies all from fear. Our body-consciousness becomes so firm through fear that to take the mind off the body and fix it on the Divine within us becomes very difficult. We must give up fear knowing full well that by the death of the body we do not die.

Therefore, death is to the body and not to the Spirit within us. A man who has really attuned himself with God is not at all afraid of death. So it is incumbent on every one of us to be free from the fear of death. This fear contributes a good lot to the present agitated condition of the world. It adds fuel to the fire, as it were, because fear and hate go together. Where there is hate there is fear and where there is fear there is hate. Both are born of the sense of diversity or duality or body-consciousness.

In fact, you know that you are not the body. Otherwise you would not say, 'My body'. When you say, 'My body', it clearly shows that you are not the body. Still you identify yourself with the body and when anything happens to it you think that it happens to you. Ramdas remembers to have read about a great Stoic philosopher. Ramdas does not exactly remember to which country he belonged, but in fact, sages belong to all countries. His name was Epictetus. He was a slave under the Roman

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Emperor and he was harshly punished by his master even for slight mistakes. He was almost everyday beaten by his master. One day for no serious fault of Epictetus, the master beat him so severely that his leg broke and he became lame. After some time a friend of Epictetus, who lived far away, came to see him and finding him limping asked him how he became lame. Then Epictetus gave a characteristic reply, 'I am not lame, but my leg is lame'. His detachment from the body was so perfect that whatever happened to it, he never thought, had anything to do with him.

You say, 'My body, my senses' and so on, and still you think that you are the body. If you say, 'My coat', it does not mean you are the coat. So also when you say, 'My body', it does not mean you are the body. You are something that possesses this body and distinct from the body. This 'I' which is separate from the body is all-pervading and eternal. Be conscious of that. When death comes to the body you can boldly declare that it is the body which perishes and that you do not die. This 'I' within you is the all-pervading cosmic 'I'. Your indentification with the body is the greatest blunder. When you detach yourself from the body you know who you really are. You are not the individual but the cosmic Spirit, all-pervading, omniscient and eternal. You have only incidentally assumed this body for playing a certain part in the world and after having played the part you will throw it off, as you doff a coat after you have used it for some time and do not find any more use for it. So, fear should have no place in you. It should certainly leave you. When you are fully conscious that you are the eternal Truth, you are completely free from all fear.

TWO KINDS OF FAITH

Q: Can you say something about faith, not in its emotional aspect, but in its constructive and vertical aspect?

Ramdas: Faith is of two kinds. We place faith in God, relying on the words of saints who have seen or realised God. This is one type. Another type is born of direct perception or experience of God. Before we have experience of God, it is good to have faith in the words of a spiritual Master who has realised God. If we follow his advice as to how we can realise God or see God for ourselves, it will be easy for us to attain Him. Thereafter our faith in Him will be of a different nature. It will be the

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outcome of not merely an intellectual acceptance based on the assurance of another, but of our direct experience or vision of God. We will know definitely that God *is* and that we can ever trust Him.

SIMPLE FAITH IS THE BASIS OF TRUE LOVE

Q: What relation is there between hope and faith?

Ramdas: Ramdas remembers having read a book called 'The Greatest Thing in the World'. It begins thus: 'Which is the greatest, faith, hope or love? Love is the greatest.'

Q: When it reaches this height, is love or charity something different from faith and hope?

Ramdas: Love is the fulfilment of faith and hope. In India there was an old illiterate lady who had very great devotion for God. She had a Pundit or a Sanskrit scholar engaged to read out to her in Sanskrit the story of Rama. She used to sit daily before the Pundit and hear patiently for an hour or two the reading of the Ramayana although she did not know the meaning of a single word, as she did not know Sanskrit. She knew only that the story of Rama was being read; and her faith in God was so great that the mere hearing of it gave her the necessary inner strength, peace and joy. The faith then fructified in her life in the form of charity. Her husband was a retired Superintendent of Police at that time.

One day at the gate of his big house a strong and healthy young man came and begged for alms. He pleaded that he had no means of livelihood since his recent release from prison. He wanted only a meal from that house. The master of the house, the retired Superintendent of Police, knew very well that the man was a hardened thief, had committed many thefts, had gone to the jail several times, and he himself, while in service, had sent him to prison. Now he told the beggar that he could not get anything from there and asked him to go away. As he was well-known as a thief, there was no chance of his getting a job and he was going hungry. Somehow driving the man away from the gate, the retired officer went inside his house.

After a few minutes he came to the kitchen at the back and, to his surprise, found the ex-convict he had driven out, sitting on the outer verandah and eating food. He asked his wife why she should feed such a vagabond. She replied that the poor man was very hungry and so she wanted to feed him. The master explained

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to her that he was a thief and did not deserve any help. To this she gave a simple reply, 'I do not know whether he is a good man or a thief; he came to me hungry; my duty is to feed the hungry. That is all I know'. This simple reply silenced him and he quietly walked away to his room.

Many people think this is misplaced charity. It is not. Her heart was overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and that love expressed itself in giving food to him. It was the purest love, compassion and charity. So faith, if it is real, will reveal itself in the form of love or charity.

A STORY

Once a poor man approached King Yuddhishtira, who was also called Dharmaraja, which meant the king who strictly followed the path of virtue. When the poor man asked him for help, Yuddhistira said, "Come tomorrow, I will give you what you want." His brother Bhimasena overheard this and at once ran to the place where there was a big bell hanging, and which was rung only when any great victory was achieved, or on certain great occasions. Bhimasena straightway rang the bell. It created great commotion everywhere because the ringing was sudden and people did not know of any great function or victory. They all came out to ascertain the reason. Yuddhishtira was also surprised. Report came to him that Bhimasena had rung the bell. Bhimasena was called and asked for an explanation. He replied, "We have gained a very great victory today, victory over death for twenty-four hours. Dharmaraja told that man to come tomorrow, saying that he would then give what he wanted. That means till tomorrow Dharmaraja is not going to die. He has triumphed over death. This is indeed a great victory." Yuddhishtira was awakened. He called the man back, gave him what he wanted and sent him away without waiting for the next day.

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BELGIUM

BRUSSELS, 17th September, 1954.
Place: Residence of Mr. Luc Haesaerts.

SCIENCE WILL STUMBLE UPON THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT

Questioner: Can you say something about spirituality and science? In what way is spirituality related to modern science?

Ramdas: So far as Ramdas understands, science has progressed now to the extent of asserting that matter is energy. This is a great discovery and the time will come shortly for the scientists to say that energy is Spirit. That will be the next step forward. When they go to the length of establishing that matter and energy are one and the same, they have definitely gone a long way. We believe that there is a Divine Power or Shakti pervading everywhere in the universe, and that Shakti is responsible for all the manifestations that we see before us. So the forms are nothing but the expressions of energy. The scientists have also come to the same conclusion. But one more step and they will stumble upon the realm of the Spirit. They will say that there is an all-pervading silent Spirit at the basis of this manifestation, from which the whole universe has sprung forth.

So scientists are gradually coming to that stage where they will find that the discoveries made by the intellect are bound by certain limitations and that they should go beyond these limitations. This is possible when they make researches into the Spirit or in the spiritual realm, which can be done only by stilling the mind. The mind cannot reach there. Only when one goes beyond the mind one can get the experience of the higher Truth. Scientists will surely get it because, after churning the mind for some time, they have to give some rest to it, and when the mind is at rest they will experience the Truth. Then they will declare that the supreme Spirit is the support of the universe.

Recently Ramdas read a book called 'Man the Unknown'. The author seems to be a great scientist and he has explained, in the terms of science, some Biblical teachings and proved that whatever has been said in the Bible is perfectly scientific. He himself was at one time a non-believer in God and he came to believe in Him when he applied science to religion and came to the conclusion that behind the physical universe there is a Spirit

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which we call God, Truth, Nirvana, and so on, according to the religion to which we belong. Scientific discoveries will lead the scientists ultimately to the realisation of the immortal Spirit — God. This is inevitable because just as in the physical plane there is evolution, there is evolution also in the mental plane. Mind in its ultimate quest will transcend itself and stumble upon the realm of the Spirit to which the mind, the senses and the intellect cannot get access.

IT IS NOT SHUNYA

Q: A man of science is generally a materialist. You said just now he should go farther than mental. Is that stage Shunya?

Ramdas: It is not Shunya. It is the impersonal aspect of the Divine. God has two aspects, personal and impersonal. The impersonal has no form, change or movement, but He is still the all-pervading, radiant Spirit, in whom we can merge and thereby liberate ourselves from the clutches of the flesh. As it is, we are too much in the grip of the flesh and we must detach ourselves from it and realise that we are the immortal, all-pervading Spirit. God is at once formless and with form.

TO TEACH OTHERS TO BE GOOD, BE YOURSELF GOOD

Q: My daughter wants to know how all the birds come very near her and she loves them very much. She is very kind to them. There are many who like the birds, but still there are many who do not like them, but kill them. Is it right?

Ramdas: We can convince them not by telling them to be good, but by becoming ourselves good. By following our example people will stop killing birds and will start liking them.

Q: People are prepared to fight all over the world, and there is no good preaching.

Ramdas: As Ramdas told you just now, the solution rests in our perfectly loving everybody. If we set the example, we will make others also free from hatred. Example is better than precept. Ramdas does not go and preach voluntarily to everybody, but when they put him the question he tells them that there can be peace in the world only if we love one another. By so doing we get peace for ourselves and share it with others. We have to eradicate ill will and hatred from our hearts. Then only we can

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love others in the true sense of the term and by such love develop harmony in our hearts and harmony outside us.

There are many people who want to love, but they do not know how to do it. If they are told that if we learn to love one another we will be really happy and that our unhappiness or discontent is due to our lack of love for our fellow-beings, they cannot easily understand. Love is the only remedy for doing away with all thoughts about war, discord and strife. At present our mind is not full of love, but of confusion. If we concentrate on love, we will gradually create an atmosphere of love around us and those who come in contact with us will also learn to love, and there will be waves of love spreading harmony and peace in the world.

HOW TO CULTIVATE LOVE

How to cultivate this love is the question. We must seek the Source of life by attaining which we can really love one another. That source is God or the great Reality within us. A man who has found God within, truly loves all because he sees in all the same God. There is a saying in the Bible, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. This is one of the greatest teachings of Jesus. On what basis can you love another unless you have dived deep into yourself and found that you and he are one? The same Spirit that dwells in you dwells also in him. And this oneness of the Spirit makes you automatically love another as yourself. If you want to love another as yourself, then you must see something common in both of you. Intellectually and physically you are different from others. But still there is something common between you and them, and that is the universal Spirit which we call God. Truly, we are all manifestations or forms of the one Divine Spirit, and in the light of this knowledge alone we can truly love one another, giving up our petty spirit of exploitation, ill-will and hate.

People are busy finding out ways and means to bring about peace in the world. So many conferences are being held and pacts are entered into, still the situation remains the same. Then, where is the way out of the difficulty that confronts us? How to dispel the cloud of war that hangs over us? Everybody seeks to solve the problem, but there is no solution found. We are in despair and are getting nervous. Intense fear has seized us. That does not help matters. We do not know what part to play in

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order to bring peace and goodwill in the world. If we talk about love we must first practise it ourselves. If God has given us the power to love others as we love ourselves, then we should make use of that power. Unless we see the Divine everywhere and can look upon all as our own Self, we have no right to speak about love.

Our love must transform those who come into contact with us. Preaching is not always necessary. But there is a way by which we can commune with another and seek relationship with another, recognising the kinship of the Spirit. If we transmit love from person to person, country to country, and nation to nation, then we will be able to create what is called world-brotherhood. This is essential now to stem the tide of war that threatens to overwhelm us.

START A CURRENT OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

Q: Shall we have a day when we have such type of peace in the world?

Ramdas: Ours is to strive for peace and in such striving we will find true joy. When we try jointly, through our prayers to God, to bring about peace in the world, by His grace peace is bound to come. We must rise superior to our petty jealousies in order to avert discord and war. But what we find now is that people have no faith in God. Really God is not far away from us. He is within our heart and He is absolute peace. When we tune our mind with Absolute Peace, we attain peace and naturally create an atmosphere of peace around us. Individual as well as collective effort is necessary. Individuals should try to find peace within them and all such individuals in all parts of the world should jointly try to bring peace by spreading the message of peace, and it will definitely have its effect. Though the entire humanity may not join, let a small percentage of it at least take part in this. It will gradually transform others who are not at present in favour of this movement, because man's nature is developed according to the influence of the company he keeps. If we are true to God within, and love our fellow-beings equally, by our contact they will also be inspired to do likewise, and in this way we will be able to start a current of universal love and peace, which will neutralise the antagonistic forces of discord, strife and war.

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YOU ARE THE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT

Q: What about fear of death?

Ramdas: You must get over the fear by becoming conscious of God—knowing you are the immortal Spirit. You are not going to die. Fear of death is a weakness and this weakness gives rise to so many other evils. When there is fear, there is no peace. Now you create an environment of discontent, agitation and disorder. If you have attained peace for yourself, you can spread it and even those who are mentally restless will be able to enjoy it in your company. So you will be transmitting peace waves to every one who comes into contact with you.

What you have to do is to draw your mind inward and realise peace by communing with God who is absolute peace. Be like a generator of peace and distribute it everywhere. To heal the sorrows of the world and to remove the existing unrest in it, there is the need of a continuous flow of such peace from every one of us. In fact, you have not to become but have only to realise the divine power. You ignore the source of this power and do not think of it at all. On the contrary you think that you are only the body, subject to birth and death. You are deathless, immortal Spirit. Death is only to the body. Take your stand on the rock of the immortal Truth which is your real existence. Then you cannot but radiate everywhere love, light, peace and joy.

You are denying that Absolute Peace, which grants you all the strength required to combat the evil desires and, by triumphing over them, to attain everlasting happiness which the soul hungers for. You have to awaken this aspiration in the hearts of all others. Of course, one who has realised this happiness can alone do it. Have you not before you the example of Mahatma Gandhi, a simple man who drew the whole of India to follow him. It was done by his soul power, the power that came from the depths of peace. He is an example before the world—a man who used soul force for the right purpose and in the right manner. The soul force set free from the hearts of every one of you with the object of gaining world peace can work wonders. Mahatma Gandhi said that he could guide people on the right path, because he was constantly in tune with the Divine. This is possible not only for him but for everyone of you. In the hearts of every one of you the Divine dwells. But you are not aware of Him. How can you then draw from Him the power to raise yourselves and help to raise others?

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TO AVERT WAR IS IN OUR HANDS

Q: We want to ask you so many questions, but we do not know how to ask. We are rather afraid and will it not be nice if you tell us something, of your own accord? What we find is that although there is spiritual progress, the fear of war is still there.

Ramdas: Who is responsible for war? Ourselves, are we not? All of us directly or indirectly contribute to the creation of the war mentality. So every one of us should strive to attain peace individually and then there will surely be universal peace, and war will be impossible. We know the remedy very well, still we do not care to make use of it.

Q: Is there a hope to find peace for humanity, because so far war and all the bad things have always lasted?

Ramdas: There is surely hope, provided we apply the right means for creating peace and preventing the recurrence of war.

GOD NEVER CREATED EVIL

Q: Is evil not part of the creation, because evil and good have so far existed?

Ramdas: When love prevails, evil disappears. When we tune ourselves with God, discord and war disappear. Because we are divorced from the great Love that should dawn in us by union with God, we have created this condition. If we turn our mind towards Him, who is love, we can dispel the war clouds that are hanging over us and thereby establish peace and goodwill on the earth. It lies with us to have war or no war. If we have the vision of God, we cannot see any evil. Evil is of our own creation. It is not God's creation. A man who lives in harmony with all beings has conquered evil. Don't you see some people who have conquered and risen above evil, and who behold goodness alone everywhere? Goodness alone is real, as evil is only the offspring of the ignorant mind. If we accept the sovereignty of God by surrendering ourselves to His will, we will love all alike, and see no evil at all.

OPEN YOUR HEART TO RECEIVE GRACE

Q: I wonder if good does not exist simply as contrast to evil. Is the world of peace possible at all? For that purpose, will it not be necessary that the human being should be transformed

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gradually so that they can understand and reach that love you are talking about?

Ramdas: They must open themselves to the influence of the Divine Spirit. Then the transformation is possible. If they shut the doors against such influence, they will remain as they are and will be creators of evil in the world. If they want to create peace they must hearken to the voice of the Spirit within. Supposing you want light inside your room, you have to open your windows. If you keep all of them shut, the light does not come in. God's grace is ever pouring on you, but you have not opened the windows of your heart to receive the grace. It requires faith in the Divine Power to receive His light and His grace.

GOD IS LIGHT—EVIL IS DARKNESS

Q: Does evil disappear automatically?

Ramdas: Yes. It disappears when you approach God, just as darkness disappears when you go nearer light. When you are in perfect union with God, it completely disappears. Of course, in the early stages there is a keen struggle, because darkness strives to persist. Darkness is born of your feeling of separateness from God. You have denied Him, so you do not pray to Him or contemplate on Him. So evil is self-created. As soon as you are united with Him, evil has no place in your life and you bask in the light of God. Darkness of ignorance is unreal, but light of Truth is eternal.

Q: In nature things are not perfect. It is impossible to take the darkness away. When you try to do so, you always fight with darkness. In nature darkness always exists. It is impossible to open the door to light if there is no darkness. You are talking only of men, but I am talking about all the creatures. In this way we find darkness and light, and to take darkness away it is impossible. We cannot have joy without sorrow. Even if we can, it would be monotonous. The great joy of life is only possible if there is darkness. When we think about nature, if we are like you mystical, then there will be light everywhere. But with the nature it is impossible. We know and believe that darkness and joy are mixed.

Ramdas: This darkness is created by man. Even though there is light everywhere we do not see when we close our eyes. We say it is all dark. Here we ourselves have made darkness. If we open our eyes there is light everywhere. So also God, the

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eternal light, is everywhere. We shut our eyes and say there is darkness. If we open our eyes we will see God and His light everywhere.

"GOOD OR EVIL, THINKING MAKES IT SO"

Q: Common people like me see things imperfect, and nature has its opposites. Is it not true?

Ramdas: Ramdas will tell you about the conception of darkness and light. If you go deep into the matter and transcend reason, you will realise that good and evil are merely conceptual. What is good for you may be bad for another, and what is light for you may be darkness for another. So there is no standard of darkness and light in nature for you, when you look from a lower plane. Good and evil are simply standards set by the mind. There is a state beyond the mind in which there is no good and evil. This is the absolute plane from where you see the whole world filled with one light and one power.

In the lower or relative plane, your standards of right and wrong, light and darkness exist, but they vanish entirely when you transcend the relative and reach the absolute. From the absolute standpoint you do not see nature as separate from the Divine. You see oneness everywhere. Before you attain this state you are like a pendulum moving betwixt light and darkness, good and evil, joy and grief. Now you laugh, next moment you weep — a victim to the pairs of opposites. If you transcend this lower nature and dwell in the higher divine nature, you will find the whole world pervaded by divine light and you are no longer affected by the pairs of opposites. This is what the religious leaders, the sages and saints, have taught us from their experience. If you also strive, you can attain that state in which there is neither sorrow nor death.

SOME SCIENTISTS HAVE REALISED THE COSMIC TRUTH

Q: Do you think that scientific knowledge is in opposition to this knowledge?

Ramdas: No, it is not at all so.

Q: Is the power of science an obstacle to spiritual attainment?

Ramdas: No, it is not. After making researches in the field of nature, some scientists have ultimately transcended nature and have entered the realm of the Spirit. Ramdas has read the lives

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of some scientists who have reached that stage. Researches into nature do not satisfy them. They go deeper and ultimately reach the Divine Spirit which is at the basis of nature. Then they get the faith in the Divine and know that by union with Him alone man can fulfil his spiritual destiny. So science, instead of being an obstacle on the spiritual path, decidedly becomes a help. It is perfectly true that in the early researches of nature scientists conceived a kind of scepticism regarding the spiritual values of life. But as they advance they come to believe in the existence of the Spirit, because at a certain stage they are baffled, and they cannot grasp the mystery underlying the psychical and physical phenomena. Their microscopes and the test-tubes may give an insight into the phenomenal nature, but there are certain subtleties in the working of nature which do not in any way come within the domain of the intellect. So when they are baffled, they probe deeper and rise higher, and discover the source from which this vast universal manifestation has evolved, and at last experience their union or oneness with the Divine Cosmic Truth or Reality.

THE MESSAGE OF GITA — INTEGRAL YOGA

Q: I feel that disharmony in the world is due to the fact that intelligence, love and action are considered opposing one another. The spiritual ideas of India and the philosophical ideas of America, do you think can unite these three elements? Is the uniting of intelligence, love and action not the solution for harmony?

Ramdas: You are thinking on the right lines. You see there are three functions—of the intellect, of the heart and of the body. Intellect thinks, heart feels and body acts. In the Bhagavad Gita, the great scripture of the Hindus, there are three Yogas described. They are Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that one attains union with God through knowledge, love and action. These three must develop together so that we can unite with God through the divinisation of intelligence, love and action. This is called integral Yoga. Our minds must be in tune with the infinite and eternal Intelligence and our love then flows spontaneously towards the entire humanity because humanity is the expression of that infinite. When we have love towards everybody, actions will naturally be done as inspired by that love. If our actions are all dedicated to God, done in His name, then we have acted in conformity with the pure love that rises in our heart,

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The trouble at present is that in many countries, people are highly intellectual. They have no love in their hearts. Action is there, but it is done in a state of ignorance and governed by the ego. The Indian sages point out that the way to realise supreme happiness and harmony lies in the illumination of the intellect, the purification of the heart and the dedication of our actions. Now you will be able to integrally attune yourself with the Eternal within you.

So what you say is perfectly right. We need not speak only of America here. This applies to every country. The weakness is there in us all. Our intellect works only on the surface and has not entered deep within to see the Divine. So intellect has not been helpful to us, as it does not indicate the right direction. Love has not dawned in our hearts, because there is attachment. We love certain people because they are our relations and friends. We consider others as outsiders and strangers, and we do not love them. True love freely flows towards all alike. The body is toiling day and night for our individual comfort and of those related to us, but we are not at all concerned about the happiness of others. So our vision is narrow, our love is selfish and our actions are tainted. Thus we create an atmosphere of strife and disharmony around us. We must get over this. It is a defect in us — individuals. And nations are made up of individuals. If we liberate ourselves from the clutches of selfishness and expand our vision, our life will become blessed because it will then pour out love, kindness and service spontaneously to all alike.

GOD IS WISDOM, LOVE AND POWER

Q: Are there not techniques to join the intellect, heart and action?

Ramdas: They develop together. They are three parts of the same being. In meditation you identify yourself with the Divine within you, your heart overflows with love towards all alike, and your actions are selfless and are done for the relief of the distress of others whether they are your relations or not. It is in the impure heart there is attachment, but when your heart becomes pure by constant remembrance of God, there is no more attachment in it and it overflows with pure love towards the entire humanity.

So these three paths of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma go together. They are shown in the Bhagavad Gita not as different Yogas but

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as one synthetic approach to God, because God is not merely a silent and static Spirit, God is all love and sympathy for the suffering humanity and He is also God of Karma or action, and His power works through the body for the good of others. God is eternal wisdom, God is infinite love and God is almighty power. These three are the atttibutes of God.

MEDITATION LINKS YOU WITH GOD

Q: What is the importance of meditation? Can one progress without meditation? Is it, after all, very necessary on the path of spirituality?

Ramdas: Let us try first to understand what meditation is. Meditation means uniting yourself with God through a mental discipline. The object of meditation is to keep your mind in tune with Him and to realise Him. Meditation is therefore a necessary spiritual discipline before we can realise God. We remember God constantly through prayers, and when the mind becomes more and more concentrated, it merges itself in meditation into the divine Being within us and we feel one with Him.

Remembrance leading to meditation enables you to feel the divine Presence. Meditation links you with God. God-thought should alone fill the mind until it becomes still and it is now that you realise your identity with the supreme Reality. So, you cannot leave off meditation from spiritual discipline.

Q: Meditation and concentration are necessary only two or three times a day, or as many times a day as possible?

Ramdas: As many times as you possibly can.

GOD-THOUGHT PURIFIES YOU

Q: You say there is a world beyond goodness and badness. Can we realise that world everyday and every minute perfectly or is it only a constant struggle?

Ramdas: At the very start we cannot realise it. We have to struggle on the path. Self-purification is necessary in order to attain that vision and experience in which we see the world as nothing but the manifestation of the Divine. Before we get this experience we are obsessed by the pairs of opposites — good and evil, etc. At first you must take it that anything that takes you near God is good and that which takes you away from God is bad. After you have realised God, there will be no such thing as good

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and evil for you, and your love goes to everyone good or bad alike, and your sympathy is for the whole humanity and your actions are for the good of all. But till then you do have the conceptions of good and evil.

Imagine you are assailed by bad thoughts like those of lust, greed and anger. You should consider them as evil thoughts, because they lead you away from God, and so you must conquer them. These thoughts must be substituted by positive thoughts of love, kindness and mercy. We cannot get nearer God unless our mind becomes pure, free from lust, greed and wrath. These evil thoughts can disappear only by constant remembrance of God. Ramdas found this technique the best. It is very simple; you have only to remember God constantly, and all bad thoughts will disappear at once.

Attune your mind with His glorious name. The name of God has wonderful powers. Each devotee may take any name of God which he holds dear. Let him repeat it with all love and see its wonderful effect on the mind. The mind becomes calm and silent within a short time.

FIRST GOD AND THEN WORLD SERVICE

Q: Is the realisation of absolute peace and love possible in this life for everyone?

Ramdas: Yes. Realisation of absolute peace and love is possible in this life, and it is attainable by everyone if only he strives for it.

Q: Can one strive individually, and seek peace and love individually? When we learn history and look backwards we see that collectivity has always swallowed up the good individual efforts even though some individual struggled to reach good.

Ramdas: In spiritual matters, organizations, societies and movements are not of much avail. Each one must raise oneself to the divine status by one's own efforts—acts of self-discipline, concentration, meditation and surrender. These are to be achieved by one's own individual struggle in order to ultimately unite oneself with God. Collectively this cannot be done. By joining a society one will not be benefited in any way in rising from the human nature to the divine nature. But after attaining that state, one can join others in their activities to bring happiness and joy to the world.

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It is not advisable for a spiritual aspirant to start collective activities in organized institutions, in the name of humanitarian service, before he realises God. By communion with God one must develop love for all beings, and that love must inspire one's activities. Otherwise in the name of God we will be exploiting others instead of helping them. Without having achieved peace for ourselves there is no use of our joining together with the aim of bringing peace to others. If we do so, we will be only working for our selfish ends. A beggar cannot render help to anybody. A man of wealth alone can do it. So also a man who has gained peace can alone give peace to others. Individual peace helps in producing world peace and that is the only way.

TO BE SERVANT OF GOD IS THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Q: Is there not a possibility of selfishness lurking in every action for others?

Ramdas: Unselfish action is possible only when our mind is completely merged in God. That is the criterion for right action. Our actions get contaminated, because our heart is not pure. There is pride lurking there. We may be doing things ostensibly for no personal gain, but there may be a subtle desire for name and fame. We often do an act of charity expecting our names to appear in the papers. There are some who do charity without expectation of any reward. That attitude can come only when we feel that we are the humblest servants of the Divine and that He, seated in our hearts, is making us do everything.

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BRUSSELS,
18th September, 1954.

BE ESTABLISHED IN THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS

Q: In meditation it happened to me once that I suddenly discovered the absolute identity of all human beings, animals, plants and even minerals. This continued even when I was walking amidst crowds of people. After that when I came back to the consciousness of the ego, I have been wondering to find out an explanation for the state after death, where the ego has disappeared completely, and we return to the source we come from. As an explanation, the idea of many electric lights in one line strikes me, where the power that works one lamp cannot oppose the other.

Ramdas: Your experience is right. In meditation you have discovered the true meaning of the world manifestation. All the names and forms have at their basis the one eternal, all-pervading Spirit. You have found out the essence, the truth or life principle of all existence. The diversity that you see is only on the surface. In the depths there is only one existence out of which the manifold names and forms have come forth. This is the experience you have gained when your ego-sense vanished. When it came back, you began to see diversity again, the unifying experience having disappeared. Your experience shows that you have a glimpse of the Truth. After repeated trials you will be able to establish yourself in it and maintain the awareness of the Reality, even when you are engaged in ordinary activities of life.

KILLING FOR FOOD IS INEVITABLE

Q: In the life there is always strife. Even when we are walking we are killing many insects. Is there something to be done to avoid this strife in life?

Ramdas: You might have heard about the discovery of the great Indian scientist, Sir J. C. Bose. He found out that the entire world before us is teeming with life. There is life and emotion in plants, and even in apparently inanimate objects. When you cut a plant you are killing life. J. C. Bose has shown by experiments that plants possess similar feelings to those of animals and human beings. When a plant is happy or in pain, we

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can clearly know its different emotions. We do not feel like killing any life for any purpose. It will thus be impossible for us to live in this world. Even when we cut vegetables, we know we are killing life. That means we cannot use vegetables. We cannot break stones, because there is life in them. It is difficult to live, if we look at the problem from a purely non-violent point of view.

It is said that for food you may kill plants or animals. The rule is to avoid wanton destruction of plants or animals. While even animals kill only for the sake of food, it is deplorable that man, gifted with intelligence, kills out of hate or ambition for power and wealth. Indeed, such human beings are worse than beasts.

It is good to avoid meat in the case of those who are striving for spiritual development. That is why it is said that only such food as would help devotion to God should be taken. For them vegetarian diet is the best. Whether you take vegetable or meat diet, killing of life is involved.

DIVINE LOVE IS A PANACEA

Q: Often we are provoking others to attack us.

Ramdas: That shows our heart is not pure. Our impure heart provokes others to attack us. Here defence is useless because we are responsible for the attack. Ramdas will tell you an instance. On several occasions people came to attack Ramdas and he only smiled at them. They came very near him, but when they saw his smile they went away. You need not have any lethal weapon for defence. The greatest weapon is love, which converts an enemy into a friend.

We have heard many saints of the past used this weapon of love and triumphed over enemies. Lord Buddha has said categorically, 'Give love for hate'. Jesus has said, 'Love thy enemies'. What is the principle underlying these sayings? We ought to purify our heart and fill it with love. Love can triumph over everything. The worst passions can be quelled by the dawning of love in our heart. This love is not the ordinary human love. Its nature is divine. It is a gift of God. When we get it we are saved and we can save others.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE WORLD TEACHERS

Q: When you have your own religion, could you appreciate the good in every other religion without hurting your own?

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Ramdas: How could we hurt our religion when we see the same good in other religions as we see in ours? Now Ramdas quoted two sayings of the great Teachers of the world, Buddha and Jesus. Buddha says, 'Give love for hate'; and Jesus says, 'Love thy enemies'. Can we not appreciate both Buddha's and Christ's teachings which are the same, and also of other Teachers of the world? We must be able to accept them all.

Q: It is only a different way to appreciate God.

Ramdas: It is the same God who speaks through all the great Teachers. The Truth is the same. God speaks through Jesus and Buddha, though the words may be different. Buddha spoke in Pali, but Jesus in Hebrew.

Q: In the Catholic religion there is a dogma that salvation can come only through that religion. What does Ramdas think about it?

Ramdas: That is what every other religion also claims. The Mohammedans say that there is no salvation except through Mohammed. In Hinduism, Lord Krishna has said, 'Abandoning all paths come to Me alone for shelter. I will liberate you from all sins'. Jesus says, 'I am the way. If you accept Me and take Me as your Saviour, you will attain salvation.' This means through all these Teachers one God speaks. The 'I' of all of them is the one great God.

TRUE RELIGION EVOKES LOVE IN US

Q: So do you mean to say any religion that preaches love must be accepted?

Ramdas: If it does really evoke genuine love in your heart, it is a true religion and you should accept it.

NO CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Q: I should like to know what should be done between the East and the West. Science seems to be a hindrance.

Ramdas: Science is also trying to discover unity in nature. The scientists have found that matter is energy. When you see everything as the expression of energy, then you see unity in diversity. When you dive deep down into the realm of the Spirit you see there is absolute oneness. The supreme Spirit that pervades everywhere is beyond the range of the senses. Anyhow science has progressed so far as to believe in the existence of

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energy which is the same as the matter we see before us. Science therefore does not come into conflict with religion, because it has advanced so much and it is on the road to further discovery. Of course, the scientists do not believe beyond what they have discovered by means of sense perception and experiment. As the intellect cannot grasp the higher truths, the scientists do not want to pass any opinion about it, but ultimately they will also come to have faith in the existence of the Spirit. East and West are one.

GOD IS THE ONE PARENT AND WE ALL HIS CHILDREN

It may be necessary for some aspirants in the early stages to stick to a particular creed or church, but in due course they must outgrow them. A fence is necessary for a small plant, but not for a grown-up tree. The plant outgrows the fence. So also we must outgrow the small fence of our own creed and make our vision universal, and behold the Divine everywhere manifest. We must cultivate a spirit of universal brotherhood, looking upon the whole humanity as one family and God as our common parent. Differences based on caste, creed and sect are unnatural. By these we are creating barriers among ourselves. We must break them so that we may unite as children of the One Parent and live in mutual peace and goodwill.

GREAT POETS AND SINGERS POSSESS THE VISION OF GOD

Q: Can the poet have the ultimate vision and do you believe that the ultimate vision is of the Spirit?

Ramdas: Universal vision is the right vision. Great poets and great singers catch glimpses of the Eternal. Otherwise what they say cannot be so inspiring. From their contact we can make out that they have that vision. Their love goes to all alike irrespective of race, religion and nationality. When the lamp is giving light it makes no distinction between one set and another set of people. So also their vision being universal, whoever goes to them is received with love and affection. The hunger of humanity is for love.

REFUSE TO WAGE WAR

Q: What should be our attitude if we are forced to join the war?

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Ramdas: Refuse to wage war, and face the consequences. It would be better to be killed than to kill our brethren.

FIGHT A RIGHTEOUS WAR IN SELF-DEFENCE

Q: If Hitler sends enemies to my country, do you mean to say I should not do anything?

Ramdas: We are talking about the question of your being forced to wage aggressive war upon people for power and possession. In such a case you must not join. But you will have to fight for your country's independence, when it is at stake. There, it is a righteous war and not an engagement for wanton killing. You should first attempt to transform the enemy into a friend with the power of love. When the enemy falls upon you unjustly to conquer you, war is permitted in self-defence. Individually a saint would rather allow himself to be killed than kill the enemy. Where such power is not available for the preservation of the family and country, fight is permissible. You know soldiers fight only because they are commanded by their leaders. In the last war you have heard of cases where soldiers of opposite camps shook hands with each other as brothers and friends. The Hindu scripture, Bhagavad Gita, was preached in the battlefield. To protect the weak and helpless it is necessary that we should fight.

RELEASE YOUR SPIRITUAL POWER

Nowadays war is not the same as of old—not a fight between two armies. Bombs thrown from the aeroplanes cause destruction of innocent and harmless people on a huge scale. How to combat this great menace? It is possible only through the exercise of soul force. You may not believe in soul force, but this force is really irresistible. Ramdas feels sure there will not be any war, although the great leaders of different nations are envisaging war and are preparing for it. What we should do is to individually develop soul force for quelling the war waves that seek to overwhelm us, and produce security, peace and harmony.

Ramdas has been going from place to place with the sole object of awakening this force in you all. There is a great reservoir of spiritual force within you. You must become conscious of it through communion with God, and make use of it for the good of all beings and creatures on this earth. This blessed human life is given to us in order that we may use this inherent

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divine force. The war problem will then be conclusively solved. In fact this is the only answer to the problem. You must therefore have the awareness of the divine Spirit and adjust your life and conduct according to the light you get from within. The more you draw your vision inward from the outside clashes and conflicts of life, the better instrument you become for bringing real peace into the world. The human body is like a temple. Keep it pure so that God may work in it and His light may shine through it.

ONE TRUTH TAKES VARIOUS FORMS

Q: We see two horses. Though they are separate and have individuality, they are after all horses. Do you think that there is also for humanity an essence behind the individualistic sense or at the end of time will everything be one?

Ramdas: Ramdas tries to understand the question. There is the same power in each and everyone of us seeking to reveal itself by assuming different forms and colours. Is that what you mean? Just as electric energy passes through hundreds of bulbs of different colours and the current is the same that lights each bulb of a different colour, so there is one Life principle that activates and illumines all beings and creatures in the world. For example, you take a lump of gold, from which you make various kinds of ornaments such as necklaces, chains, rings, bangles, etc. Though different in name and form they are all made from one metal, gold. So also one divine essence that pervades everywhere has taken all these diverse forms and names. The Life principle, the essence of all things, is one.

Q: What causes individuality? What is it that gives the different shapes?

Ramdas: We must see the difference and also the undifferentiated Truth at the basis of this diversity.

YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD

Q: Do you believe in individual life after death?

Ramdas: In what state we die is a thing to be considered. Individuality remains so long as the soul has not attained union with God. If at the time of death a person meditates on God and loses himself in Him, then his individuality, which sees itself as separate from God, dissolves. Otherwise, according to the Hindu belief, he will be reborn. It will be better to realise Him here

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and now, for He dwells within you. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'

Do not be afraid of death. Live your life in utter surrender to the Divine will, feeling His presence at all times. You must consider this body as a temple in which God resides. Purify it so that God's holy light may shine in and through it. Then you will think well of everyone, love all, and be ever kind, merciful and forgiving. You should cultivate these virtues and become pure and guileless like children.

Jesus has said, 'Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' You must be free from all passions and desires. You might see two children quarrelling for some time. A few moments afterwards they are friends again. Their hearts are free from malice and hate. In a pure heart alone God will reveal Himself. 'Blessed are the pure in heart because they shall see God.' So be like children. Do not be childish but childlike.

SORROW LEADS US FROM THE UNREAL TO THE REAL

Q: I would like to know how one should take it when a great sorrow befalls. Is there a way out?

Ramdas: Generally sorrow comes to us as a result of the loss of an object which we hold dear, but which by its very nature is perishable. This sorrow is due to our attachment. As the object perishes or passes away, we feel grief. Therefore instead of loving the perishable, we shall do well to love the imperishable. The bitterness of this sorrow teaches us to turn our mind to the Real, the imperishable. The imperishable is God.

A STORY

Ramdas will tell you a story. Lord Buddha, the great Teacher, was going from place to place preaching Dharma — the path of liberation — to the people. He happened to go to a village where he found that a woman had lost her only son and was sunk in deep grief. She was going round the village asking everyone to do something to bring back her son's life. All of them said that as her son was dead there was no chance of recalling him to life any more. But she would not believe it. A man advised her that she had better go to Buddha who happened to be in that village.

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The woman went to Buddha and told him that her only son had passed away and that she was very much grieved over the separation, and requested him to restore her son kindly to life. Buddha replied that he would revive her son, provided she could bring for him a handful of sesame seeds from a house in which no death had occurred. She agreed and went about from house to house asking for a handful of sesame seeds. When the people were about to give her what she wanted, she told them the condition that nobody should have died in that house. They all said death had occurred in their houses and the dead were more than the living, with the result that nowhere she could get the sesame as required by Buddha. Now the truth dawned upon her that death was common in the world and that those who were born had to die one day or the other. She found consolation and giving up her grief came to Buddha and begged him to teach her Dharma — the way to Nirvana.

CHRIST IS ONE OF THE AVATARS

Q: What do you think of the theory of Avatars? Do you believe that Christ was an Avatar?

Ramdas: Ramdas does believe in Avatars and takes Jesus as one of the Avatars.

SERVE WITH LOVE AND SYMPATHY

Q: Is it not evil for a doctor to charge money for the treatment?

Ramdas: If he has money enough to get on, it is proper for him not to charge for the treatment. He may take as much as is necessary for his livelihood and not charge heavily. Whatever excess he gets from the patients may be used for the service of the poor. He should not demand anything from the poor. In this way he can bring relief and health to the sufferers. In trade the merchants should never make exhorbitant profits and exploit the customers. In all professions the evil of exploitation exists. All have to be honest, sympathetic and just.

WHO IS A MYSTIC?

Q: Is it possible to live like a mystic even in the family?

Ramdas: It is possible. The mystic can maintain his family

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and also be helpful to his neighbours. When people do not live this kind of life, they are said to be living an abnormal life. Abnormal life is that in which they live and work for only their selfish ends. They must be self-sacrificing and be kind and helpful to others in their distress. This is the way of the mystics. They have a universal vision. They love all alike. This is the ideal life.

NEED OF REVOLUTION IN THE HEART

Q: Is amelioration of human condition possible without a bloody revolution and without cancelling the human liberty and freedom?

Ramdas: True, human liberty is being abused. It is being used for exploiting people by taking by foul means what belongs to them. Such liberty is harmful to society and should be condemned. Any social reform should be effected only by a non-violent and not a bloody revolution. First we should reform ourselves and form a society in which we can live together with mutual goodwill and service. This revolution should essentially take place within us and extend its influence without. When our heart is reformed, we will be able to create an atmosphere favourable for others to live in. If not, we become the cause of confusion and disharmony in the world. There is no use trying to make people believe or understand, by mere teaching, the greatness of unity and self-sacrifice. Internal change alone is the way.

BELIEVE THE WORDS OF SAINTS

Q: We cannot know God through our intelligence, but through love. Is it possible to make any difference between love and intelligence? How can we really love something that we do not know?

Ramdas: God cannot be known to us by intellect, because He is beyond its grasp. We can love Him with our heart believing in His existence from the words of the great saints and sages who have seen and realised Him. A man leaves his child for a far off place when it is only a few months old, and remains separate from it for years together. The child grows up and does not know who its father is. But the mother tells the child that its father is in such and such a place and teaches it to love him.

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The child learns to love the father although it has only heard about him from its mother. The love gradually matures and at last the child sees the father.

So, love of God is possible even before we have seen Him. Saints who have seen Him tell us there is a God and He is all love and mercy, and if we rely on Him we will be happy and peaceful. We must put faith in the words of the saints who speak to us from their own experience. So, God can be reached only by faith; faith in the words of saints. Through intellect we cannot know Him. We realise Him only when intellect ceases to function and becomes perfectly still.

INTELLECT CANNOT KNOW ITS SOURCE

Then the question naturally arises why God should give us intellect. Intellect helps us to know that we do not know anything. That is the best use of the intellect. When we know that we cannot know God, we must open our hearts and let our love flow towards Him. Our love gradually becomes so intense that God does appear before us and He makes us feel His presence always. We will have Him only when we give Him our entire love. So, faith alone can guide us to Him and not reason. Though intellect can grasp all external things, it cannot know its own source. When you have a pair of tongs in your hand, you can pick up anything. But the tongs cannot catch the hands with which they are held. Similarly the intellect is worked by a higher power and it cannot turn back and know that power.

A DIVINE HALO SURROUNDS A SAINT

Q: Can the aura of a saint be photographed?

Ramdas: Some people have photographed it. When the heart is pure, God's light within shines out.

Q: I wonder how it can be photographed? Photography is after all a mechanical thing.

Ramdas: Yes, it can be photographed in some cases because the light is clearly seen.

Q: Some people who magnetise have a large aura.

Ramdas: Those, who have their inner light lit, exert a magnetic influence on others. It is said that a liberated soul, who is free entirely from the clutches of desires and dwells always in the divine consciousness, possesses five main qualities:

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1. When spiritually illumined, he feels he has taken a new birth. His identity with the body gives place to identity with the Eternal Spirit. He is free from all sense of fear, and death has no terrors for him. 2. He is transparently guileless. He is perfectly innocent and pure like a child, and therefore above the sense of sin and virtue. He lives, moves and has his being in God. 3. He is in a state of supreme ecstasy; day and night he swims in an ocean of bliss. 4. He is really one who has surrendered himself completely to God and has become a very mould in whom God has poured Himself. He is divinised within and without. 5. He has a halo around him and divine lustre on his face. His heart is flooded with love for all. He is ever smiling, peaceful, joyful and childlike, and so everybody likes him and finds peace and joy in his presence. The last is the only external sign by which one can know that he is a great soul. The other qualities are known only to himself. When thousands of people are drawn towards him and he exercises a strange fascination upon all who meet him, we can be sure that the Divine is revealed in him.

LIMITATIONS OF THE INTELLECT

Q: What is the real prayer? Should we have words to pray or is it enough if we remain in communion with nature and be in a state of humility?

Ramdas: Ramdas should like to know the meaning of being in communion with nature. If you take nature as God, then that communion will help you. If you take nature as different from God, it will not help you.

Q: I did see nature as the manifestation of God. I do not see God as something personal and I cannot use words to speak to Him. I know nature comes from God. I have great difficulty to pray with words. I prefer the way of knowing things, Jnana Yoga.

Ramdas: Socrates, the great philosopher, defined that knowledge is to know that we do not know anything. With the poor intellect we try to know God, but we cannot. What we have to do is to sit in meditation and dissolve the mind in the superconscious Reality within us. The use of the intellect is only to distinguish the real from the unreal. Whatever you see is unreal because it is perishable, and the Truth which pervades the universe — the substratum — is alone real. It is imperishable.

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Our quest should be to realise that imperishable. So we should turn away from the perishable and lose ourselves in the imperishable. So long as the intellect is active we will still be groping in the dark. The individual sense must disappear. That is possible only by the cessation of the intellectual dynamics and absorption into the divine consciousness which is called Samadhi. Then we realise what we truly are. There are no two entities in Jnana Yoga. Knowledge, knower and the known, all become one. The intellect can know very little. Even in the manifest life there is so much mystery into which the intellect cannot probe and discover. Then how can it gauge and know about the Infinity — the nameless, formless Reality?

Therefore, in the Upanishads, the path of negation — नेति, नेति — not this, not this — is prescribed. Mind thinks of so many things which are not He. He is beyond your physical, mental, sensual and intellectual consciousness. So all these things must be transcended before you attain the consciousness of the Divine. When you experience the Divine you say, 'I am He, I am He'. It is not the intellect that says this, nor the mind. God makes you speak.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE ROSARY

Jnana is realisation of Atman or Brahman through discrimination, which is the function of the intellect. By a process of negation you arrive at the Reality. If you should see God in nature, you have first to see Him within. When the ego-sense is there, you see only differences and diversities. When you attain God-vision, then you see Him everywhere. That means you see your own Self projected as the universe. This is the most exalted vision. To attain it the mind must be totally free from lust, greed, wrath, jealousy and pride. God shines only in the pure heart. Saints have experienced this beatific state and they say that is the goal of human life. That is a vision of perfect oneness. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said, 'I am residing in the hearts of all beings like a string in a rosary of beads'. Here the rosary is made of the thread and beads. The thread may be of a material different from the beads. Say, it may be of silk, cotton or silver, and the beads may be of glass or gold. A great Maharashtrian saint has improved upon this by describing that God and the universe are like the gold string on which gold beads are strung. The string is gold and the beads are also gold. So

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the indwelling all-pervading Spirit is divine and the manifestation comprising all beings and things is also divine. God is all, and all in all. This is the comprehensive vision of God. This vision grants you eternal joy.

PRAYER HELPS WHERE INTELLECT FAILS

Q: Is it only by praying that one can reach that state — by saying the same prayer again and again?

Ramdas: Prayer helps us to concentrate our mind on God. In our helpless condition when we are beset with worries, we find it very difficult to fix our mind on God. Prayer unites us with Him. Our heart becomes pure and we realise His presence. Intellectual efforts to see Him meet with nothing but failure. When you commune with God through prayer, your intellect ceases to be active. In the stillness of the intellect the light of God shines in you. The mind is as restless as a monkey. How to stop its antics? The name of God is the rope with which you can tie the monkey. Ramdas' experience is that chanting of God's name is an easy way of controlling the mind. Intellectually we accept that God is within us and know that we are He. But we have to experience that state. We want intuitional experience, i. e., direct perception of the Divine within us and our union or oneness with Him. This is very important.

INTUITIONAL EXPERIENCE IS WHAT WE WANT

Q: In the mystic intuition is there not also a part of intelligence? If this intelligence is considered as a very poor tool, is it not different from synthetic intelligence?

Ramdas: Intuition is the outcome of enlightened intellect and purified heart. Intuition is the Divine speaking and acting through us. Here the ego-sense is absent. We are conscious that we are one with the Divine and that our body is only an instrument through which the Divine works for fulfilling His work in the world. The person who has gained this highest experience does nothing by or for himself, and he rightly says that he talks because God makes him talk, he works because God makes him work.

Your life is now utterly dedicated to the Divine. You are one with Him and still you are different from Him. This is indeed strange. This is an experience which cannot be put

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into words. However, the mystics have struggled to express it and when you hear them you wonder what they are talking about.

God is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. If He is an object of knowledge, He cannot be real and He cannot be eternal. Because He is self-existent and self-luminous, He is not an object of knowledge. Every object of knowledge is perishable. The mystics say much about Him, but whatever they say cannot be totally He. Therefore, in the Upanishads it is said that He is not what you think of, He is not what you talk about.

GOD IS THE GIVER AND GOD IS THE RECEIVER

Q: Is detachment from earthly things absolutely necessary to progress on the spiritual path?

Ramdas: There is a saying that we may possess things but may not be possessed by them.

Q: If renunciation is recommended for the spiritual progress of humanity, will that not in a way affect the material production necessary for humanity?

Ramdas: Spiritual progress is not satisfactory because of your attachment to things. Ramdas does not say that you should not be engaged in production. You must produce as much as you can for the good of all people in the world. It is attachment that makes you hoard more than you actually need. This attachment on the part of individuals brings unequal distribution in the world, with the result that some people are rich and live in comfort and plenty, whereas others are poor and starving and do not get employment even for earning the necessaries of life. This inequality is definitely due to cupidity and attachment. Attachment is the cause of so much misery and confusion in the world. Production of food and wealth must go on, so that all may be fed and clothed. God gives you plenty so that you may share it with the needy and distressed. It is by His power that you earn; and when you give, you give only to Him — in the poor and the suffering. This is the ideal we must cherish and put into practice. It is not by remaining idle in the name of devotion to God that we can reach this great ideal. Let us not forget that we are all children of the one Divine Parent. We are all brothers and sisters. You may think Ramdas is preaching communism. It is not communism, but it is *divinism*, if Ramdas can coin such an expression.

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MYSTICS ARE SAME THE WORLD OVER

Q: Are there differences between the mystics of Europe and India?

Ramdas: When Ramdas was in Geneva and France he had occasion to visit two monasteries and had talks with the abbots there. They asked Ramdas to tell them his mystic experiences, and he told them in detail how he felt while walking in the path to God. After the talk was over, they said Ramdas' experiences tallied exactly with the experiences of the saints of the Christian faith. There was absolutely no difference. So experiences of the mystics all over the world are the same. They also quoted some of their teachings which went to prove that the experiences of Indian mystics and European mystics are one and the same.

REVEAL THE BEAUTY OF THE SPIRIT IN ART AND SONG

Q: Are there relations between art and mystic experiences?

Ramdas: Mystics have a sense of beauty. Those who have got the talent for music, sculpture, art, etc., when they become mystics, express their exalted and holy emotions through art, music or sculpture. You will find great poets among mystics in India and other countries. They have revealed their spiritual genius through their particular talents. The mystics are in tune with nature, and through nature God. When they stand before the vastness of a landscape, the greenness of a forest, the scintillating expanse of the blue water of the ocean, the golden hue of the sunrise and sunset, they go into a trance and feel the hallowed presence of the Most High. In ecstasy they pour out their hearts in celestial rhapsodies and songs. They love solitudes where they converse with God. For instance, the painter-saints have in their pictures brought out the etherial beauty of their adored and chosen ideals.

If you make use of the divine gifts of art and music for the sheer gain of money, name and fame, you are doing wrong. So it entirely depends upon you, how you use your talents. You must strive to reveal the inner beauty of the Spirit in your heart. So saints sang in rapture the glories of God.

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EXTERNAL WORSHIP LEADS TO INNER REALISATION

Q: In all art there is an expression of divinity that purposely tries to glorify God.

Ramdas: To see divinity everywhere is a very high stage of spiritual attainment. Before we reach that blessed state we have to purify ourselves by adoring God in particular forms. We must behold Him in some great beings first and afterwards see Him in all beings and things. So it is that we keep before us a beautiful image of an incarnation and look upon it as the manifestation of God. In the earlier stages, an image of God is very helpful, but later on we have to transcend the worship of the image and feel the presence of the Divine within. This is the experience of the mystics. Mystics open a relationship with God as that of a child towards the mother, or of a servant towards the master, and through such relationship they purify their minds by means of constant remembrance and realise the greatness and glory of God.

EGO-SENSE IS SIN

Q: What are the great obstacles for everyone to reach spirituality? What is the greatest sin?

Ramdas: Ego-sense is the greatest obstacle. It is the greatest sin. What we should do is to surrender to the Divine will. 'Oh God, Thy will be done. By Thy will alone everything happens. I am nothing. Thou art everything.' By this attitude the ego-sense will disappear and you will feel His presence within you.

When 'I' and He become one, then there is only one universal consciousness. We become like a dew drop that falls in the ocean. We thus see that ego-sense is the sin and obstacle. If we put ourselves in the hands of God, He will guide us on the right path.

Q: We understand that there are two kinds of sin. One is that which hurts others and the other is that stands in the way of our approaching God.

Ramdas: They are the same, and both are caused by the sense of separation from God. We hurt another because of this. A humble man is lifted up by God. The proud man falls because he forgets God and thinks highly of himself. Continuous remembrance of God's power and greatness turns us meek and humble. In the night the glow-worm feels proud of its tiny light,

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but when the sun rises it is nowhere. So what is man after all, a puny creature before the almighty power of God!

SELFLESS ACTION IS THE WAY OF LIFE

Q: One's actions can have good and bad consequences. Are there actions that are completely evil, but bring good to others?

Ramdas: All depends upon the nature of action. If it is selfless, it is the outcome of a pure heart and therefore conducive to the good of everybody. We should not act out of selfishness and thereby cause injury to others in order to profit ourselves. There is no redeeming feature in such a life. It is utterly evil.

STILL THE MIND AND REALISE GOD WITHIN

Q: You said yesterday about the most important thing to start on the road to spirituality. We should like to hear something more on the practical side.

Ramdas: The first thing necessary is the aspirant's contact with a saintly person. By that contact his heart is awakened.

Q: If it has already been awakened?

Ramdas: Then let him take the next step. Now the aspirant begins to feel that there is God within him and by communion with Him he seeks to get real peace. In the company of the saint, he tasted this peace which came to him when the mind and the senses were all at a standstill. It revealed itself from God within. Since it was at first shortlived, he struggles to get established in it. The quest starts to find God, the absolute Peace, within. What should be done? The saint instructs him to remember God constantly and think of His greatness, power and glory, and chant His holy name. It is a very simple thing. Truly, when the aspirant takes God's name, His attributes flash on his mind and he becomes aware of God's presence. God is all-pervading, eternal and infinite. He is all power and wisdom.

When the aspirant repeats the name of God, his mind gets in tune with the sound of it and it tastes very sweet to him because he is singing the name of his Beloved. The mind is like a serpent gliding here and there. If you sing to it the divine Name it will become still. The mind free from desires becomes calm and serene. In the serene mind God's light shines and the aspirant becomes conscious of Him within. He is now a mould, as it were, into which God pours Himself.

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THE STEPS THAT LEAD TO GOD

The first thing necessary is the yearning for God. Next, society of saints. Third, repetition of His glorious name. Fourth, meditation on His attributes. Lastly you will know that God is within you. There is a saying in the Bible, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Your 'I' becomes one with God. Then you say, as Jesus said, 'I and my Father are one.' Hanuman, the great devotee of Rama, was asked by Rama as to who he was. He replied, 'As body I am your servant, as an individual I am part of you, and as Atman I am yourself.' So let us offer ourselves completely to God, in body, mind and soul, so that He may be revealed in us and His power may permeate all parts of our being. Ramdas has given you briefly the method of approach to God. If you take this line of approach, ultimately you will be blessed with the vision of God everywhere and you will get immortal bliss and peace.

HOW TO KNOW WHO IS YOUR INNER GUIDE

Q: When we try to meditate, sometimes the 'I' takes the place of the Divine and thinks that it is in union.

Ramdas: It is true, very often the 'I' puts on the mask of God, pretends to be He and misguides us. We might be all the time beguiled into thinking that we are acting according to the Divine will whereas we are guided only by our ego. Such a thing does happen. Then we must find through introspection whether it is the ego that directs us or the Divine. This can be done by examining the motives of our action, whether we are actuated by selfish aims. This is the only criterion. But the man, who has surrendered himself to God, does not doubt. He is ever in a state of peace and ecstasy.

A man is generous when he is happy. On the contrary, when he is miserable he has a small heart and will not give. When you are joyful, you are incapable of doing any harm to others and you are kind and good. You will now feel the Divine Presence. You will know whether the ego or the Divine is guiding you.

THE LAST ADVICE

Q: I am sure many are benefited by your visit here. They must have got something from you as they all have been happy. What is your last advice to us?

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Ramdas: Take God's name constantly, whatever name you hold dear. It will make your mind pure. Always sing the Name to yourself.

Q: Will you give us the Name?

Ramdas: Ramdas has got one Mantra, which is 'OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM.' You may repeat this Mantra always.

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HOLLAND

Place: The Spiritual Development Centre,
145, Haringkade, The Hague.
19th September, 1954.

LOVE DISSOLVES ALL DISTINCTIONS

Ramdas: We are living in a peculiar world. We see diversity but we must find unity. We can find unity only when we probe into the diversity and reach the underlying Spirit. Hate must go and it must be substituted by love. Love can come only if we recognize our spiritual kinship with all. Jesus has said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' How can you love your neighbour unless you know that you and he are one in Spirit? Then only our love goes to all alike irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. The spiritual kinship is born of our acceptance of God as father and mother. We are fighting with each other because we are not aware of the same God who is our one supreme Mother and Master.

Q: This sounds like Christianity.

Ramdas: Yes. Truth is the same expressed in all the religions. Love is a solvent of our ignorance and love is an answer to all the problems that face us.

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

Glory of Divine Love

Q: We are very grateful that you have taken the trouble of coming here. We should like if you could say something about your ideals and the way in which you try to realise them in the world.

Ramdas: First of all Ramdas must introduce himself to you as a humble servant and a small child of God. God is his master and mother. He has sent him to the Western countries in order to propagate the ideals of universal love and service. Unless we cherish this ideal we cannot love all alike, and there is no hope of peace and goodwill in the world. Universal love is born of universal vision, which in its turn comes to us when we resign ourselves

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to God who is eternal, changeless Truth, ever residing in our hearts. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' In that kingdom surely God dwells. The definition of God according to Christ is love. We must therefore be pure and meek; free from lust, greed and wrath. Only the pure in heart can see Him. By prayer we should commune with Him constantly as existing within us, and live a life of perfect friendliness with everybody. When anybody does us harm, we must be able to forgive him. Ramdas remembers here the words of Jesus, 'How can you expect God to forgive your trespasses when you do not forgive the trespasses of your brethren?'

There is another dictum by one of the great souls who came to teach mankind, and whose name is Buddha. He says, it is not that we have only to forgive those who hate us, but we have to give love for hate. So the great Teachers say that we should love all our fellow-beings and move with them in a friendly spirit.

When once we hand ourselves over to God and become His, His light and peace will be revealed in our heart and we will be transformed into His very image. So, to see God we must be perfectly pure. Ramdas is quoting from the Bible, because he is familiar with the teachings of Jesus, and the Bible gave him great inspiration during the period of his struggle to attain God.

How to Attain Perfect Purity

What should we do to attain purity? Prayer, constant remembrance of God through the chanting of His name, and ultimate surrender to His will, are the ways of attaining perfect purity. By prayer we keep up our contact with God, and we open a channel between us and Him so that His love, power, grace, light and peace may pour into us. Supposing there is a dry pond near a lake and we want that pond to be filled with water; what we have to do is to open a channel and connect the pond with the lake and when this is done the lake floods it with water so much so that the pond overflows and becomes one with the lake. So we should open a relationship with God as His child or servant and call Him our mother, or master and allow His glory to manifest in us.

This is the one way we can connect ourselves with God and stay our mind always in His remembrance. Then in course of time, when our remembrance becomes intense we will lose ourselves in Him and will be completely transformed by His grace. Grace is very important. Without grace we cannot achieve

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anything. His grace must awaken us before we can realise that His will alone prevails and it alone causes everything to happen. So long as we are conscious of this, we can never commit a wrong or sin. We are sanctified and made holy. We will see everywhere the Divine. We will see our fellow-beings and all creatures as the expression of Divinity. Then we cannot but love everybody alike. In this vision we will be spontaneously spreading peace, goodwill and harmony everywhere. Wherever we go we will be able to awaken, in the hearts of people, faith in God. This is not true of only a few here and there. This is possible for all of us.

Men Are Lower Than Animals!

The very fact that we are born as human beings entitles us to make this life blessed by realising God and spreading His light and joy all around. This is the mission with which human beings are born. But what are we doing? We are living and fighting like animals over petty gains, ambitions and ideologies. What a sorry spectacle we see in the world! We see fighting accompanied by merciless killing merely out of lust for power and wealth. Animals kill for food. They do not kill out of hate. In this respect men are lower than animals. We must have our hearts purged of selfishness and hatred. We must open ourselves to Him and allow His grace to flood our hearts. Each one of us should realise the Divine within us. If we do so we will bring heaven upon the earth. There will be no strife, discord and war.

Man is given intellectual powers which he can use for creating harmony in the world. Instead of this he employs them for inventing new machines, atomic bombs and neuclear weapons to destroy human life. What a horrible state of affairs! If we do not reveal in our hearts the inherent love divine by which alone we can produce harmony and peace in the world, we will be heading towards another global catastrophe. We should avoid this by every means possible. As the thought so is the action. When we attune our minds with God, our actions will become pure and they will be for the good of others.

A Story

Remembrance of God means elevation to a higher consciousness. We must keep this light burning within us always. You

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know, as soon as the light goes out, we fall into darkness. When our vision is pure we see only good. If impure, we see evil. Ramdas will tell you in this connection a story from the Mahabharata. There was a very good king named Yudhishtira who led a righteous life. In his own time there was another king named Duryodhana who was evil-minded and lived an unrighteous life. One day Lord Krishna, a great incarnation of God, asked Yudhishtira, the virtuous king, to pick out for him a bad man in the world. The king went about in search of a bad man. He returned and told Krishna that he could not find such a one. Krishna called Duryodhana, the vicious king, and asked him to find out for him a good man. Duryodhana went in search of one. He could see only bad men everywhere and not a single good man. He came and reported this to Lord Krishna. This incident shows that if we are good everybody is good to us, but if we are bad everybody is bad to us. So let us be good and have no enemy. We will then love all and be loved by all. Such a life is possible only through self-purification.

Sun and glow-worm

Self-purification can come only by constant thought of God. When we remember God, the almighty Power, we feel how insignificant we are. Now our ego-sense disappears and our minds become pure. Let us know that God's power alone is working in the world. What can we do? We are absolutely nothing. Have you seen a glow-worm which shines in darkness and thinks it is a great thing? When the sun shines you cannot find where the glow-worm is. So in the presence of God, the sun, we are like glow-worms. We will become humble and meek, and feel we are the servants and God is our all-powerful master. Otherwise, we forget Him, the ego-sense comes up, and we think of evil and resort to bad actions for which we will reap bitter fruits later. When we remember God we will walk always on the right path.

Love is a Solvent

Therefore let us not forget Him. Continuous consciousness of God is the same as living in His presence. Such a life is perfectly holy and blessed. As it is, we are too much engrossed in worldly life. We think we are only the physical body. We

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do not know that we are the immortal Soul. We have forgotten what we really are. It is not by externalising our mind that we can achieve anything real, but we must turn inwards by constant prayer to and remembrance of the Divine within, and surrender to Him, so as to dispel the darkness of nescience and awaken the light and peace eternal. We will then be able to do all our actions in a spirit of love. Disharmony can go only by the power of love. Love is a great solvent. Suppose there is an object that does not dissolve in water or in some other liquid. We put in a solvent which enables the object to dissolve. So, love is the solvent that causes the individual soul to dissolve in God. Why is it that we do not love our neighbour? It is because our narrow love has not changed into universal love. We can make our little self expand into the universal Self. God is not in the heaven above, but He is in our hearts. We may call Him God, Truth or Reality. To find Him we must dive deep within ourselves. He is there ready to receive us. We have lost touch with Him. Truly if all of us discover Him within us, what a happy world can we create!

Ramdas' Mission

Ramdas has come all the way from India only to talk to you about God and create an atmosphere of peace and goodwill everywhere. Let us think and talk of God and awaken God-awareness in all people we meet, and may they become lamps lit with light divine. Let us not waste our lives for the fading enjoyment of low desires. Let us not fall an easy prey to temptation and forget God. We sit ostensibly for prayers but our mind wanders in ever so many directions. Let us fix our thought on God and pray for strength, purity, love and peace. Repetition of the Name is the way to keep up a steady remembrance. When you take the name of your friend or relation who is living far away, at once his figure comes into your mind. So also if you, at all times, take the name of God, you will have God-consciousness continuously with you. You should believe that you are taking the name of God, who dwells in you and who is your eternal Mother and Master. God is personal and also impersonal. So take Him in His personal aspect as your companion, master or mother. Some look upon Him only as impersonal. But He is both personal and impersonal. He is the all-pervading Spirit — the eternal essence of all that exists — but He is also a Supreme

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Person who pours His grace on us. He is at once with form and without form. He has manifested Himself as the universe. He also manifests Himself as incarnations who lead men on the path of righteousness and perfection, and to ultimate union with Him.

GOD IS AT ONCE PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

Q: Is not the Nirguna or the impersonal Brahman the highest ideal? Do we not realise the formless when we meditate on this formless Divine?

Ramdas: You speak of the Nirguna Brahman. God is all-pervading, changeless, nameless and formless Reality. That is His impersonal aspect. When that impersonal Brahman is born as a great Teacher to save mankind, He becomes personal. This is called Saguna Brahman. So God is not merely a cosmic Truth, but He becomes also a Divine Personality. He is the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Spirit. He is the mighty power that rules the world, residing in the hearts of all beings and creatures. When we are conscious of the Divine and realise that we are the eternal Reality, and that all our fellow-beings are expressions of the same Reality, we will love everybody.

The personal Brahman — the incarnation or Avatar — helps us to realise the impersonal Brahman. 'I and my Father are one.' Who is the Father? He is the impersonal Brahman; and son is the personal Brahman. When Jesus was asked to show his Father, he said, 'He who sees the son sees the Father.' This means the Father who is impersonal is manifest before them as the son. He is the personal form of the impersonal Brahman or God. God is at once impersonal, silent witness, and also the personal — a Divine Person manifest before you.

WHY WE FORGET GOD

Q: Why do we forget God?

Ramdas: It is ignorance that makes us forget Him. Knowledge should dawn in us. Knowledge comes from the great Teachers who exhort us not to forget God. We have to follow their advice.

YOU GET NOTHING BY CHURNING WATER

Q: Where has ignorance come from?

Ramdas: That is a mystery. Ramdas was asked this question

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wherever he went. God's ways are inscrutable. The poor human intellect cannot know the why and wherefore of many things. Our limited intellect cannot judge the ways of the Infinite. But this much we know that ignorance has enveloped us and it can be removed by God's grace, and grace can come to us when we keenly aspire for Him. We must pray intensely, 'Oh God, remove my ignorance and make me Thine.' When a bird is caught in a cage it does not care to know how and why it was caught. Its aim is only to get out of the cage. The same is the problem with us. If we ask how and why we are ignorant of God, we will spend in vain our whole life in trying to find this out. The best course is to pray for God's grace. His grace will enable us to realise Him and attain eternal freedom. The great philosopher, Socrates, has said that knowledge is to know that you do not know anything. The intellect may understand the external objects, but it has no entry in the realm of the Spirit. It cannot know God who dwells within us. When the intellect is perfectly still we get that super-conscious experience. Let our heart open to faith and love and let divine grace flow into us and transform us. Then we will get the peace for which we are thirsting day and night. Persistently asking the why and how of things will be like churning water. By churning water you know you cannot get anything.

GOD REVEALS IN THE HEART

Q: So you say intellectual thinking is the cause of all troubles?

Ramdas: Yes, in the spiritual line. Intellect can discriminate, but cannot take you to the divine goal. At a certain stage you come to know that by your own effort nothing can be gained. You try to understand God, but fail to do so. True knowledge comes only when the mind is perfectly still. 'Be still and know that I am God.' According to the Hindu way of approach, reason helps only to distinguish the Real from the unreal. Reason tells you whatever you see here is perishable and does not last, and so you should not identify yourself with these things, but should turn your mind to the real and everlasting. Thereafter the heart guides you. Unfortunately the heart which is filled with impure emotions distracts you. That is why there is so much chaos and confusion in your minds. If the heart is with God such things will not be there.

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Q: What is there behind the intellect?

Ramdas: God is behind the intellect.

Q: Can we not use the intellect in a higher sense?

Ramdas: Only for discriminating the Real from the unreal. There is a prayer in the Upanishads, 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality'.

BEHOLD THE DIVINE BEHIND THE FORMS

Q: As I look at the flower as the manifestation of God, I feel it is very real.

Ramdas: Yes, it is real, in the sense that the Spirit in it is real. What is it that creates it and makes it grow? There is a certain power in it that makes it grow and have the beautiful form. After some days the form fades away, whereas the power that brings it into being is imperishable. You see only the external forms and not the Spirit within them. And we are unhappy when the forms disappear. If you are aware of the eternal Spirit that pervades everywhere, you will never feel the loss of anything. You will then live in the spiritual realm. Most people live only in the material realm. Your sense of beauty is only for the external. You like a fair man and not an ugly man. There are godly men who see the Divine even in lepers and serve them with so much love. They never see ugliness in them and therefore do not shun them. If you behold the entire world-manifestation as Divine, you will have no likes or dislikes for any particular form. It is because of likes and dislikes, there is conflict and darkness in the mind.

Q: Are we to love even the shark in the sea?

Ramdas: You see the Divine in it also. It does not mean that you should fall into its mouth. You may not dislike it or hate it.

Q: But you have to defend yourself against the evil forces as in the case of a serpent.

Ramdas: Ramdas has in his own life allowed serpents to come near him. His love for them was so great that they never did him any harm. They wound round his leg. He neither feared them nor had the least enmity towards them. He saw God in them.

Q: But he may be bitten by a flea?

Ramdas: If it wants to bite let it bite and have some blood. We do not have to hate it on that account.

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INTELLECT IS WORKED BY DIVINE POWER

Q: These are intellectual questions and I believe we cannot use the intellect to solve the big mystery. But you are telling us about loving everything and when you refer to the shark, flea and flower, the question comes — what is God?

Ramdas: It is difficult to conceive what God is. How can the limited intellect gauge the infinite and unlimited Truth? It is baffling. We dare to say then that there is no highest Truth at all. But those who have gone beyond the range of the intellect, and had the spiritual realisation, declare with one voice that there is a Divine Power that controls the whole universe. That is a matter of experience which cannot be expressed in words.

The intellect works, acted upon by the Divine Power, and it cannot turn back and understand that Power. It can understand only the external objects which are perishable and that too, imperfectly. Trying to understand the Truth with the help of intellect is like trying to measure the depth of the sea with the help of a salt doll.

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE LOVE

Love is of the heart and not of the intellect. Love is the fulfilment of the spiritual quest. If a single child loves you and you love it in return, the sense of oneness thus produced gives you great joy. If the same sense of unity is achieved by loving all people in the universe, your joy will be billionfold. You will be simply revelling in infinite joy. Therefore love has been defined as God. Love is a wave that rises in the heart and inundates all the worlds. Then you say, 'The entire cosmos is mine and all beings and creatures are my brothers and sisters.' What a supreme privilege God has given us to look upon the whole universe as our own! It is said by a saint in India that God dwells in that heart in which there is compassion, forgiveness and peace. If you are devoted to God, you must develop these qualities. We expect God to be all kindness and forgiveness to us. We ought to cultivate these divine qualities first, and love and forgive our brethren who wrong us. Then we open ourselves to Grace.

There is a saying, 'When you have God as your friend, the whole world becomes friendly to you.' This is a very characteristic sentence. If God does not become your friend, you will

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meet enemies everywhere. The serpent which came near Ramdas did not bite him because Ramdas never looked upon it as an enemy. On many occasions people were about to attack him, but Ramdas simply smiled at them and they became friends. Verily, love kills hate, just as light destroys darkness. Ramdas speaks thus, as he has found from his own experience that the greatest thing is Love. The seat of love is the heart and not the intellect. Intellect often creates doubt but not the heart. The heart loves and forgives.

WHEN MIND IS PURE ENEMY BECOMES FRIEND

Q: So the use of Yogic power to tame a serpent is of a lower level.

Ramdas: Ramdas' reference is to Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti means love or devotion to God. Through devotion you can find union with Him. When your life is imbued with love you can automatically disarm others of their evil intentions towards you.

Once a man came to Ramdas in the course of his wanderings. He said that his colleagues in the office treated him very badly and therefore he was unhappy. Ramdas asked him to take God's name continuously and assured him that everything would be all right. He believed Ramdas' words and went on taking the Name with all faith and devotion. After a few days he again came and said that his colleagues in the office had turned good and friendly with him and he was very happy. Then Ramdas told him that previously he had found them bad, as his heart was impure and he had dislike for them. For dislike he got dislike in return. Now, by the repetition of God's name, his heart was purified, and so he could love them. The result was he got love in response. He projected his own mind on them and made them what he wanted them to be. This is not an intellectual theory but a practical experience.

Q: In India do you have any special training for this goal?

Ramdas: The aspirants are taught to remember God, first three or four times a day, then all the time. Not only on Sundays but on all days. By this practice alone the aspirant's heart becomes perfectly pure and he develops love and kindness for all beings and creatures. In India people are charitable and self-sacrificing. They readily share what they have with others. Some even worship tigers. They see God in them and do not harm them. There are saints who play with tigers and other

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wild animals. This is all because they have love in their hearts. By your love you can convert the most ferocious beast into a tame animal.

LOVE, THE GREATEST TRANSFORMER

Q: Can Asuras be controlled?

Ramdas: Yes, it is possible. There are cases of persons of wild and violent nature having become docile. In Bengal there lived a famous saint called Sri Krishna Chaitanya. He sang God's name and went into ecstasies. He wished everybody should take God's name and enjoy its sweetness. He went with devotees from street to street singing God's name, so that all people may hear the Name and get purified. There were two bandits in the town where this saint lived. You might call them Asuras. They were persecuting, in many ways, this saint and his followers, when going round the town singing God's names. But the devotees did not mind it at all. One day one of these bandits flung a sharp stone at the party and it hit Chaitanya's devotee, Nityananda, on his forehead, and blood gushed out. Nityananda came to know who threw the stone at him. He went straight to the bandit and, giving him a warm embrace, said, 'Oh brother, I do not mind your hitting me. But I have a prayer to you. Please utter God's name once.' As soon as the bandits saw the love and forgiveness of this devotee, their heart melted and they fell at his feet. This was a great transformation. The bandits turned into great devotees of God and joined their party. Love is the sole antidote for all the ills of the world. We must be devotees of love — God is love.

LOVE IS THE KEY-NOTE OF LIFE

Q: Do you think it is possible to realise this love in politics?

Ramdas: Love can enter every department of life and purify and ennoble it. It has a place in business, in politics, in industries, commerce and all other activities. When love is there, there will be no clash or conflict; selfishness, the cause of all ills, disappears. Ramdas talked about this yesterday in Brussels. He told that he was not preaching communism, but *divinism*. Our body must be laid at the altar of service. Our love must reveal itself in service, and that is the only way we can make our life holy and blessed.

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Q: Here the difficulty for us is perhaps more to realise God outside than realise Him within ourselves.

Ramdas: When we realise Him within we find Him also without. First of all we must see Him inside us. We cannot love others as we love ourselves, unless we know the Self within them is the same as the Self within us.

WORSHIP GOD IN THE TEMPLE OF YOUR HEART

Q: Does church-going really help?

Ramdas: If by going to church you realise His divine presence, by all means go. Do not forget, you can feel His presence wherever you are, provided you attune your life with Him. You are the receiver and He the transmitter. His voice should speak through you and He should guide you from within. In India there are many temples, but there are many people who do not go to them. There is a place of worship in the houses of Hindus. They daily resort to this room for some time and perform their spiritual practices. It is necessary for every one to retire for some time from the worldly buzzle, and sit calm and serene in prayer and meditation. When the mind is still you feel His presence. When the mind is restless God's light cannot shine in us. For example, there is in front of you a big vessel of water and you put in it some object, say a diamond. If the water is still you see the diamond clearly, but if the water is disturbed you cannot see it. So also if the mind is disturbed you cannot see God. Remembrance of God alone can still your mind. Ramdas did not do anything for seeing Him except constant repetition of His name; and within a short time the mind became perfectly still. Of course all this happened by God's grace.

GIVE ALL YOUR LOVE TO GOD

We must make ourselves fit to receive Grace. This means to keenly aspire for it, and sometimes you will have even to cry for it. As Ramakrishna Paramahamsa once said, 'People cry for wealth, position and for their relatives, and they shed so much tears that if it is all collected it will fill a tank, but there are very few who cry for God.' Our cry for God must be like that of a man who is gasping for breath when he is forcibly kept under water.

If we love God more than everything else in the world, our

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mind will automatically go to Him. This love alone is enough. But people always ask the question how we can love God when we have not seen Him. Their argument is that the child loves the mother because the child has seen the mother. The answer to this is that we are told by saints and sages that there is God and that they have seen Him. We have to believe their words and learn to love Him. Then we will also surely behold Him.

GOD WILLS FOR THE BEST

Q: As soon as God comes to us in human form we may love Him. But God of destruction gives us earthquakes and so on.

Ramdas: One who has faith in God says that everything happens for the best; even earthquakes. Floods or earthquakes take place only by His will. Even in our daily life, when anything untoward happens, we must accept it as being for our own good. We must say, 'Oh God, Thy will be done.' When calamities come and human lives on a large scale are destroyed, we feel for them. There are so many other creatures like worms and ants that die every minute in millions and millions, in this vast world. We ignore this because we feel only for human beings, as we are identified with the human life. The act of creation and destruction goes on ceaselessly. From the universal standpoint this apparently colossal destruction is insignificant. It is all the work of one Cosmic Power which is responsible for creation, preservation and destruction. All the objects are perishable, they appear and disappear, while the Spirit alone is eternal. If we take it that everything happens by the will of the eternal Spirit, we have no question at all. Everything is as God wills. We must submit to that will.

In Ramdas' life you see, that he was made to pass through many so-called trials and difficulties, but he took everything as willed by God for his good, and he was ever cheerful. He never grumbled or fretted about them. When God is all love, no evil can come from Him. We ignorant people take certain things to be for our good and certain other things for evil, and therefore become happy or unhappy accordingly.

Q: Are we responsible for what is evil in the world?

Ramdas: If war is an evil, and if it takes place, we are contributing towards it, because we are afraid of war and our hearts are filled with dislike and hatred. This creates an atmosphere in which war becomes inevitable.

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Q: So when war happens we cannot say it is God's will.

Ramdas: It is God's will. He who has surrendered himself to God takes it that way.

VOX POPULI VOX DEI

Q: But you said our own dislike and hatred are responsible for the war.

Ramdas: Yes. You see one man talks through a microphone in the transmitting station, and his sound waves reach millions and millions of people, even though they may be far away. If you send a good thought wave, it will be spread everywhere in ether. Waves of such thought will have healing and harmonising influence in preventing wars. By making a united effort to bring about peace, and by uniting ourselves with the all-pervading beneficent God, we can prevent wars. But what are we now doing? We are stricken with fear and we are nervous. We send out thoughts of hate. By this we invite wars. Let us be fearless, relying entirely upon the Divine who dwells in us. *Vox Populi Vox Dei* — Voice of people is voice of God.

Q: You can understand that it is very difficult for us in the western world. In America they say people have no time even to eat. Where is the time to think of God?

Ramdas: In spite of having passed through the horrors of war, do they still feel there is no time to think of God? No, let us remember God and not give chance for another war. You are all assembled here in the name of God. In every one of you there is a keen aspiration for Him. Ramdas has seen so many people, belonging to various spiritual associations, really hungering for peace for themselves and for all. The combined force released by the prayer of all those people will be powerful enough to stem the tide of war. If the minds of you all are in communion with God, even for a short time, it will contribute to the attainment of peace for all in the world.

Q: Do you think that we have not only to act as individuals but as a community testifying to that love?

Ramdas: How is that you have been attending your churches for many years and still wars have become inevitable in the western world? If you send waves of love in all directions, there will be peace and goodwill in the world.

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SHARE YOUR SPIRITUAL WEALTH WITH OTHERS

Q: You put before us the thought that one can realise God within oneself. But is it necessary to do it in a community; not only personal but in a community life?

Ramdas: You cannot but do it in a collective sense also. When you develop, others also develop by your contact. You form a group and mutually help in advancing on the path. When you have begun individually, you will help collective growth. You have to take every one along with you, especially those who are progressing on the same lines. This is inevitable.

Q: So do you mean to say personal salvation is impossible?

Ramdas: It is impossible. As you progress you wear yourself out in the service of others. In spirituality, mere personal salvation does not exist at all. You cannot but share your spiritual gifts with others. By sharing, your store is increased.

INTUITION NEVER FAILS

Q: It looks very simple, but you have given us a very strong force. We must think it over. Can you tell us something about intuition?

Ramdas: When your mind is perfectly still and the Divine guides you from within, your actions are unerring. You will never make a mistake. If you make reason your guide, you will make mistakes because reason cannot always be right. Of course it is better to be guided by reason than by the impulsive mind. Mind is enveloped by ignorance and cannot direct you on the right path. Intuition never fails. It stands the test of pure reason and pure emotion. It is quite possible when you have done an action, your heart says, 'You have done right', and the intellect says, 'You have done wrong'. But if you are guided by intuition there is no such conflict. Intuition is the outcome of the harmony of a purified intellect and heart. It is the divine voice speaking through you. Jesus declared, 'I am doing my Father's business.' He did not mind the consequences, and even when he was crucified, he had no regrets for what he did. When Socrates was about to be poisoned, he was advised to stop preaching about Truth so as to save himself. But he refused to stop preaching. He did not care whether the body perished or lived. It is the Divine who makes use of the body as His vehicle. He keeps it or breaks it as He wills.

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The Hague,
20th September, 1954.

GOD — THE INSPIRATION OF YOUR LIFE

Ramdas: Will you kindly let Ramdas know what he is to speak about today?

Q: Perhaps it will be nice for us to hear something about your Ashram and its various activities; or you may have something else for us.

Ramdas: Ramdas, as the very name signifies, is a servant of God, and at His command this servant has come to the West, and having gone over several countries of Europe has at last come here to meet you and talk to you about God. He has no other subject to talk about and his message is 'Universal Love and Service'. You must feel that you are all children of one God and love one another, serve one another and produce an atmosphere of harmony and peace in the world. This is the mission of every one of us, and to the extent we fulfil this mission lies the hope of world's redemption from the clutches of strife, war and consequent misery.

Our friend wants Ramdas to speak something about our Ashram. Before doing so he must tell you that God is not merely an omnipresent, static and changeless Spirit, but He is also the Master of action, which means, by His power and will the whole universe is moving and dynamic. What you have to do is that you must make the immutable consciousness the background of your life and action in the world. You have not to renounce action, but divinise it.

We are living in a selfish spirit and so we are unhappy and make others unhappy. If we surrender ourselves to God and be conscious that His power is at work in and through us, we will fulfil His plan which is to bring harmony and goodwill in the world. So, activity is not contrary to the realisation of God. We must, as a great saint has said, with one hand hold on to God and with the other work in the world. When the work is over we must hold on to God with both hands. So we must not lose contact with God even when we are active in the world. Our mind with Him and hands at work. Instance is given, in the Hindu scriptures, of women in the villages who go to a common well to fetch water for their homes. The dwellings are pretty

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far from the well. They take with each of them four or five pots of different sizes and, after filling the pots with water, they poise them on their head one over the other, so that in one trip they can fetch a good quantity of water home. These pots on their head are balanced so nicely that it is wonderful to see how they remain in position even without being supported by hand. Walking back home, these women talk, laugh and gesticulate. Still the pots remain firm on their heads. This means, though the women talk and laugh, their attention is on the pots. Otherwise the pots will fall down. This example is given to prove that you can keep your mind in God and still be active in the world. You can maintain a continuous awareness of God, and outwardly be active. If you live in this way, your life will flow blissfully for the benefit of all.

We forget God and suffer so much because of ego-sense. We are subject to petty jealousies and we make our life bitter. If we wish to sweeten our life, we must remember God and allow His power to act through us. We will then do everything for the good of others. We will be in tune with the Divine through remembrance, even as the attention of those women is upon their pots while talking, laughing and gesturing.

ASHRAM SERVICES

Our Ashram activities are carried out on the same lines. God has made us His instruments. Many come to the Ashram hungry and in rags, and the Mother, who is with us here and who is managing the whole Ashram, gives them food and clothing. We are engaged in various works in the Ashram, performed in a spirit of service to humanity. We have a Free Hospital consisting of a dispensary, and also in-patients' and maternity wards. A doctor, a compounder, a dresser, a nurse and another helper form the staff of the hospital. From the neighbouring villages poor people come for medical relief. Over a hundred patients attend daily and receive help from the dispensary. In cases of persons who are unable to go back home due to severe illness, we keep them in the ward and tend them. If patients are too ill to come to hospital, our doctor visits them at their homes. There are many poor women who have not got anything to fall back upon especially in cases of confinement. We admit them in the maternity ward.

We have an elementary school. We found poor children

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going without any education. So we started a small elementary school where we give them education so that they may learn to read and write, forming a suitable background for a better life. We give them also religious instruction so that they may pray and be inspired to live a good life. Recently we handed over this institution to the Government, having managed it ourselves for about ten years. Over one hundred children were attending the school. They were given free education, meals and dress. We have also an industrial school where children who have passed the elementary school are admitted. We teach them hand-loom weaving, hand-printing on cloth and dyeing of cotton yarn and fabrics. There is a tailoring section also. After a training for two years the students are issued certificates.

We have farms in which we cultivate paddy. Mother herself supervises the work in the fields. Also, under her instructions, the school work, the industrial school work and hospital work are carried on. In a silent and mysterious way she is managing all these institutions, though she rarely goes to any of them.

The main Ashram consists of a prayer hall where all the members gather for prayers for about an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. After that each one goes back to the service allotted to him or her. Some are working in the office, some in the kitchen, some in the school, some in the industrial school and some in other departments. We are conducting a magazine called *The Vision* dedicated to Universal Love and Service, which publishes articles relating to spiritual matters by Ramdas and the teachings of saints and sages, both modern and ancient.

TO LOVE MAN IS TO LOVE GOD

You are all very kind to Ramdas, because, you all are forms of his Beloved. This is like the talk of a child to its mother in the language taught by her.

We should not renounce work but divinise it. We must do everything in all humility, in full submission to the will of the Divine. Who is a true devotee of God? He who serves mankind. We have been taught that in every one of us dwells God, and when we serve all we really serve Him. It is rightly said that if one says he loves God and does not love his brother, he is a liar. If we hate anybody we are not lovers of God. God is pleased

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when we love one another. Ramdas often quotes Jesus. This is the main teaching of all the religions of the world. Love is the principle thing to be practised in our life. If love is not in the heart it will be dry and arid, and there is no hope of gaining God's grace. By His grace alone we can feel His presence every moment of our life.

People try to wash away their sins by so many acts of penance and discipline; but by constant remembrance of and resignation to God alone we can purify our hearts. So long as we are in touch with God through remembrance, there is no chance of our going astray. To remember Him is to walk in light, and to forget Him is to grope in darkness. This light is within us. We get it only when our heart is pure. So in the Ashram we are trying to live a model life so that all may learn how to combine activity with meditation. Communion with God is meditation. Action is service of God.

ALL TEACHERS PREACH THE SAME TRUTH

Ego-sense is the obstacle in the way of our realising God. When we think of Him we feel humble. He who is humble can float on the waters. He who is proud sinks. There is a saying in Hindi, 'While pride drowns you, humility keeps you afloat.' Through pride, so many evils beset our life. It is pride that creates the feeling of separation among us.

Ramdas has come to you to propagate universal love. Universal love can be practised only by our being one with the universal Spirit. This is what the great Teachers of the world teach us. They clothe their thoughts in a terse way; their words are pregnant with meaning. We can understand them only when we read them with a heart full of faith and an intellect disciplined and sharp. Dull intellect cannot grasp anything. Sometimes we learn scriptures by heart, parrot-like!

Jesus says, 'Love any neighbour as thyself'. This is possible only when you realise your oneness with Him in Spirit. The three great Teachers, Christ, Krishna and Buddha, were Ramdas' spiritual guides, when he was walking on the path of God with the aim of experiencing God's presence and living in God. One taught how to love. The second taught how to act without being attached and thereby selflessly serve humanity. The third taught how to attain the blessed state of Nirvana and have compassion for all living beings. When you have the universal vision you

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cannot but love everybody alike. In this connection Ramdas will tell you an instance.

BEHOLD YOUR SELF IN ALL BEINGS

Once a man wanted to have some fun. He got his room fitted with mirrors everywhere — on all the walls, floor and ceiling. Every inch of space held a mirror. When this work was over, he stood in the room, switched on the electric light, and saw his own innumerable reflections in front, back, below, above and on all sides — himself in thousands of forms. It was a blissful sight for him. After enjoying the scene for some time he came out, but forgot to close the door. His dog entered the room. Strangely enough, it found thousands of dogs on every side. It did not know that they were its own reflections. It started barking and jumping at them. When it saw that the dogs in the mirrors also barked and jumped, it became very furious. It barked and fought for a long time till it got exhausted and fell down dead.

Let us not be foolish like the dog. When we see ourselves in another, we cannot but love him. When poor people come to the Ashram with children all dirty and in rags, our Mother will give the children a clean bath, new clothes and nourishing food. Once a visitor to the Ashram, who did not see eye to eye with the Mother's actions, asked her why she was touching and washing the dirty children of low castes. Mother's reply was that she did not care whether the children belonged to a higher or lower caste. She only knew that her body and their bodies were not different, and as she washed her own body whenever it was dirty, so she also washed the bodies of the children and clothed them. So there was nothing to be wondered at. She does not expect any praise for it as she does not when she washes her own body.

TEN EVILS

Lord Buddha teaches that we have to avoid ten evils. They are: of the mind — scepticism, envy and wrath; of the tongue — gossipping, lying, abusing and slandering; of the body — stealing, killing and adultery. When we are free from these ten evils we become pure in thought, word and deed. This is indeed God's grace. Now He manifests Himself in our heart and transforms

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us into His own image. You must have heard about the Ramayana. This is an epic in which it is stated God appears as Rama. He kills a demon, Ravana, having ten heads. God and His name are not different. In India the name of Rama is popular. It is on the lips of thousands and thousands of people. When they repeat Ramnam with faith, God reveals Himself in their hearts. So if you repeat the Name constantly, the ten-headed demon within you — the ten evils — will be destroyed. God's name is so powerful that if you constantly chant it, it will eradicate all the impurities of the mind. Your thoughts, your words and your actions will then be always pure. So your life will be inwardly and outwardly holy and blessed.

ONE GOD, ONE HUMANITY AND ONE WORLD

If we lead a pure life, we will be gradually awakened to the Divine in us and the love-spring of our heart will flow out in abundant measure. This flow of love should be spread. It is a mistake to demarcate East and West. In fact, we all belong to one world. Earth is one, humanity is one and God is one, because all have come forth from one God. If we only know this, where is room for strife and dissension? The most deplorable fact is that we are fighting each other in the name of religion or God. Our fight is for the sake of power and authority. Let us remember the one God, who is love, seated in our hearts, and establish peace and goodwill on the earth. Love should not allow these fights to go on.

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

What is the meaning of religion? Ramdas does not know much of Latin. He was taught when he was a student that *Re* means back, and *Ligare* means bind. So religion means to bind back. We have separated ourselves from God and we have to bind ourselves back to Him. This is what is meant by religion. Let us therefore unite ourselves in the name of God, serve one another and live in harmony and peace. In a house, when there is unity among all members, there is happiness. When they are divided and quarrelling, there is misery. God is the unifying force. Let us seek and find Him.

Ramdas is talking like a child. He just pours out his heart. Man depends upon wealth and glory — the so-called good things —

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for his joy. These are illusive. The joy you derive from them is like a flicker. Next second the light is gone and you are enveloped by darkness. But the joy Ramdas has is pure and holy — not a tinge of grief in it — for it is dependent on itself. When you depend upon something else for your joy, and that something disappears, your joy also disappears. If you depend upon the Eternal for joy, it will be for ever. God exists by Himself. He is His own source. If you commune with Him you will have immortal joy. Ramdas will tell you a story in this connection.

A STORY

Once a man was passing on the road. He saw a blind man sitting by the side of it. Taking pity on him he asked him to come to his house for food. The blind man agreed. Now he who invited the blind man went back to his house and told his wife to have food prepared for an extra person as he had asked a blind man to come for dinner. The wife told him that in that case she would prepare meal for two extra persons. When the husband asked her why she should prepare for two, her reply was that a blind man would never come alone; he would always be led by another.

A blind man cannot come alone. If you seek pleasure in the objects of the senses, pain will inevitably accompany it. If you are united with God, you will have endless joy and peace. Then you will be unaffected by gain or loss, honour or dishonour. Ramdas' own experience is this. He was living the life of an ordinary man like any of you. In pursuit of God, he had filled himself with the thought of God. At this time, though he was reduced to the condition of a beggar, he was enjoying pure bliss. Kings could not dream of the happiness Ramdas was experiencing. Ramdas would not exchange places with them. Thus he found out that it is not external circumstances that make us happy or unhappy, but it is our internal state and our outward attitude to circumstances. In the Bhagavad Gita there is a sloka:

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥

"Alike in pleasure and pain, who dwells in the Self, to whom a clod of earth, stone and gold are alike, to whom the dear and the undear are alike, firm, the same in censure and praise. (He is said to have crossed beyond the Gunas.)"

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This is the state which is held out as the highest in the Bhagavad Gita. You have to transcend the pairs of opposites. Otherwise you are like a scared animal at the sacrificial altar. You are afraid at every moment that something bad is in store for you. But you are in a state of equipoise if you are one with God. Do not strive to get things from outside. Then you will be satisfied with what God gives you. Contentment is a perpetual feast. It can come to you only when you have got the self-existent bliss. It is there already in your heart. You have to be conscious of it. This happens only by His grace. God's radiance, beauty, manifests in you by your chanting His name. By constant remembrance of Him you can purify yourselves and be fit for His vision.

Ramdas is supremely happy to see you all here. He looks upon you not merely as friends, but as the manifestations of his Beloved. He has not come to speak to you as a Teacher, but only as a servant to his Master. In the passport issued to Ramdas by the Government of India, it has been mentioned that he is a Hindu missionary. This is not correct. He has come only as a servant of God to do service. He had prayed to God not to spare him, but to wear him out in His service. God is using him that way. Ramdas is happy over it.

Q: Where is your Ashram?

Ramdas: In South India.

Q: Do you teach Yoga in your Ashram?

Ramdas: We teach Bhakti Yoga — the path of devotion to God.

Q: Any spiritual exercises?

Ramdas: No special spiritual exercises. The devotees sit in any posture for chanting God's holy name and meditating on His glory with a view to unite themselves with Him.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER

We believe that just as food nourishes the body, prayer nourishes the soul. There are some who love God, but they do not love Him so much as they love worldly objects. So they cannot remember God constantly. A man who is attached to wealth cannot be devoted to God. Your love for God should be the greatest. Then alone your mind will be centred in Him. A devotee, Prahlad, while yet a boy, prayed to God, 'Oh God, I do not pray for anything new from you. Let my mind run towards

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you with the same force as it runs towards the objects of the senses.' Only the direction of the mind has to be changed, even as we have to change the course of a stream if its waters are not to be lost in desert sands. If we direct the stream to the fields we can raise good crops by making use of its water. Let the wandering mind be directed to God. Then we will have turned our life fertile and it will achieve good and great ideals. Otherwise it will be wasted away.

There is another kind of prayer, 'Oh God, do not grant my prayers, because in my foolishness I may ask for things which are harmful to me.' This means, leave everything to Him. He knows what is good for us. Here the devotee has passed the stage of prayer. He has entirely surrendered himself to God, just as a child in the hands of its mother. The mother does what is necessary for the child. Another devotee prayed in a wonderful way, 'Oh God, you say that we should do spiritual discipline, that we should remember you by chanting your name for a number of years in order to get your Darshan or vision. That means we must toil hard in order to get what we aspire for. You are then like a shopkeeper. If we go to the shop we pay for obtaining things. When you give Darshan only after my toiling like this, it does not mean you are conferring grace on me. You are simply paying, as it were, my wages. If you are really gracious you must reveal yourself to me without my doing anything. If you say I am not pure and so cannot see you, make me pure and grant me your vision. Then I will call it grace.' This is the highest state of the devotee in which he knows that everything is done by God, and that to say he himself can do anything is utterly false. Our struggle must cease in total surrender to Him. Then only we have Him.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantihi!

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